Lessons From Qur'an

Majmu`a-i-Dars ha'i-az-Qur'an

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Table of Contents

Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

The Book in hand is the compilation of the series of lectures that were delivered to a select group of young men over a long period of time by Professor Mohsin Qara'ati. It is the substance of his speeches that he made from time to time. The novel style together with his insight and vast knowledge of the teachings of Islam has brought fame to Prof. Qara'ati.

It was about fifteen years ago that when Prof. Qara'ati rose as a scholar from the religious centre of learning and teaching in Qum, he selected for himself a different mode of imparting religious knowledge to the younger people of his hometown.

One day while Prof. Qara'ati was on a visit to his hometown, Kashan, a novel idea suddenly struck him. He saw some young men at the corner of the street; approaching them he said: "O my dear young men! Can I have the favor of winning your friendship so that we could give to one another a good company in a masjid and have small discussions on religious matters and arrive at a solution of problems confronting us".

Thus he started a program of giving lectures in a small masjid in Kashan during the Holy month of Ramazan. At the end of the month, Prof. Qara'ati suggested to his students to continue this program on weekly basis. He used to come to Kashan every Friday and deliver lectures. This routine continued for four years and the number of his people gradually increased as they were greatly attracted by Prof. Qara'ati's talks.

When his fellow-students in Qum learnt about his activity in Kashan, they became curious about it and wanted to have a close view of the small gathering there. They liked the idea of imparting education on religion in an exceptionally unique style of delivering brief talks with audio-visual aids. Prof.

Qara'ati used a black-board for the purpose of demonstrations. Gradually, they expanded the area of their activity on a countrywide basis and an annual gathering was held in Qum. This program continued for six years. This was the time when the last of the monarchs of the Pahlavi dynasty ruled over the people of Iran in the most abominably despotic manner.

He got very much scared of the activities of these devoted followers of Islam and ultimately by the order of the Shah such meetings and seminars on religious teachings were banned. Despite this Prof.

Mohsin Qara'ati stood as a sentinel, and his guidance and training of his dedicated students which swelled in large numbers proved very successful, as after the Islamic Revolution in Iran these classes were given official recognition, so much so that his lectures are broadcast by radio and telecast on television.

Now a few words about the book in itself. One thing is certain that whatever you happen to read in this book it is the same which was taught to his pupils by Prof. Qara'ati in his talks in the classroom through audio-visual system.

But it is not necessary to explain here as to how these talks were reproduced in the form of written lessons. It is just like an art of chiseling

statues out of stones. Just as chiseling itself cannot be produced in writing so also the delivery of speech cannot be reproduced in black and white.

Therefore, lecturing is like an art where words are chiseled out in order to give a correct form and shape in the mind like mental pictures. Here, the lecturing or delivering sermons is an art which the pupils learn by watching and listening to an experienced teacher, who is the master of his craft and who applies his own experience and vision. That kind of acquiring knowledge is not as simple as studying books.

The series of lectures contained in this book have been based on Qur'anic verses and the sayings of the Holy Prophet and his Chosen descendants (peace be on them) with logical conclusions and connotations of the subject-matter being dealt with therein.

Unfamiliar terms and unnecessary details have been avoided. Another noteworthy point worth-mentioning is that these lessons were primarily addressed to and meant for the pupils who were about 18 years of age.

Besides, the problems that have been discussed in these lessons were solved by citing examples and quoting proverbs. Hence, the problems appear to be interesting and the solution obtained by logic and reasoning are easily understood.

It was a novel method that Prof. Qara'ati used on the pattern of Qur'anic teachings. If one cares to scrutinize these lessons carefully it will soon become evident that the Holy Qur'an too has used parables and cited metaphors and similes.

In a nutshell one should take into consideration the following points;

(i) After completing the preliminary education one should decide to teach the ideology and the principles of faith to the people or one should hand over this responsibility to the one who is expert in this field.

(ii) One should try to find out the dire necessity of the society and one's inclinations to discover the Right Path so as to lead oneself to that path.

(iii) Religious scholars, teachers and speakers should specialize in more than one branch of knowledge e.g. Islamic history, Islamic ideology, fundamentals of faith, exegeses and the art of teaching children and young people.

(iv) The lecture classes in masjid should include the imparting of religious knowledge to young girls, housewives, workers and laborers and even educated male persons.

(v) The system of imparting knowledge should be adapted to the present day conditions and demands, and the masjids should be treated as the citadel of Islam as well as the seat of learning.

(vi) According to Imam Ja'far Sadiq, (peace is on him) a teacher besides imparting lessons of fundamental knowledge, should also enlighten his pupils on the subject in whom they are interested.

(vii) Special care should be taken in teaching children and younger people and this should be done by one who is expert in child psychology.

The large number of books which have been written for children and young people in simple and easy-to-understand style are not sufficient enough and, therefore, it is necessary that this work should be expanded on the country-wide basis.

In conclusion, this book deals with all the vital problems that confront our younger generation. We hope that this comprehensive book will also help those who are engaged in teaching and learning the principles of Islam. We pray to Almighty Allah to grant us enough strength to acquaint the people in large numbers with the teachings of Islam.

The Publishers

Monotheism

We all have heard the word "Outlook on Universe" which means a complete enunciation of life.

Some people who observe this Universe find it a meaningful creation which has come into existence through purposeful intention with a definite purpose, discipline and order. This is called "Divine Outlook on Universe".

Some people say that neither there is any pre-arranged plan for the existence of the Universe, nor is there any creator of it. Neither it has any aim nor has it any purpose. This school of thought belongs to "Materialistic Outlook on Universe". These are the two schools of thought which we shall discuss below.

Hence, our view-point about the Universe and life is the basis of the "Outlook on Universe".

Advantage of Discussion about the Outlook on Universe

There is no ambiguity on the benefits and results of the two angles of thought. If we think that this big house, that is the Universe, has someone as its owner or master and it has some aims and purposes, it will become incumbent upon us to mould ourselves with the purpose of receiving favor of the master of this house, the Lord and the Creator, to the path which He has set for us by His revelations through His Prophets. But if this Universe happened to come into existence without any aim and purpose, then obviously there will be no necessity of accepting any discipline or regulatory restrictions.

Nowadays, the term "the duties of a responsible person" is much talked about. We can be dutiful only when we are supposed to be responsible to somebody for our actions and become accountable to him for commission and omission of duties. Under such circumstances we can only be made to feel our responsibility through Divine Outlook on Universe.

But according to materialistic Outlook on Universe, the Universe is supposed to have come into existence without any pre-arranged plan and it has assumed its present form and shape with the passage of time only. All men are mortals.

They have to die one day or the other, and death will wipe them out altogether. Therefore, the sole purpose of life is to make the best of it by indulging in luxuries and revelries. That is to say the very purpose of life is "eat, drink and be merry" and thereafter is mortality.

According to this line of thinking we can pose a question to ourselves as to why one should remain alive and why one should not commit suicide. That is after several years of hardships and difficulties why should one not come out of life's entanglement. Thus, if life has its purpose it can only be viewed through the Divine Outlook on Universe.

We do not open our doors when a person knocks it in the dead hours of night unless we know him fully well.

We cannot decide to take the kind of clothes to a place where we want to go unless we first determine what type of weather is prevailing there. We cannot decide to wear the kind of dress where we have been invited unless

we know beforehand the gathering is for a marriage ceremony or it is a condolence meeting.

Thus it is necessary that we should first recognize our duties and obligations. In other words, our dependence on the mode of thinking and recognition of facts becomes the basis of our "Outlook on Universe" or the outlook on life.

Selection of Outlook on Universe

We have said it before that there are two view-points with regard to Outlook on Universe and life, namely:

1. Divine Outlook according to which the Universe has its master, aim and purpose.

2. Materialistic Outlook which does not admit any master, aim and purpose for the Universe, that is, the Universe is without its master or controller, aim and purpose, and is retrogressive.

Man however, has to choose any of the two methods of approach as said earlier. The recognition of the best possible view-point is dependent on the following factors:

1. That method of approach which is related to intellect, reasoning and evidence.

2. That view-point and its elaboration which is compatible with our natural disposition.

3. That method of approach which makes man feels his responsibility and obligations, and which fills him with hope and happiness.

In the light of the foregoing, we ponder over it now.

Monotheism the First Principle of Divine Outlook on Universe

Intellect guides us that there is a cause of every effect and this thing is so crystal clear that if a new-born baby is subjected to a slight blow of breath on his body, he opens up his eyes and glances around him as he is conscious of the cause of that blow. In fact, the detection of the cause of an effect has been the major problem of our day-to-day life.

It is only by probing the causes and the indications that in the courts of law the advocates and the judges arrive at a decision of a case. As for example how can it be admitted that a picture of a cock or a peacock needs a photographer but the very existence of a cock or a peacock came into being without its creator?

How can one convince or satisfy the human intellect that, while there is an inventor of the camera, there is no inventor or creator of the human eye, though the photography of the human eye is more intricate than that of the camera for as and when the camera takes a picture, the film is changed, but our eye keeps on taking pictures incessantly without any break?

The camera can take either a black and white or a color picture according to the type of the films loaded in it, but the human eye can take the pictures, plain and colored, as well and at a distance, or at a close range, or in shade or in sunlight.

Similarly, human intelligence admits that somebody constructed an oil refinery but how can it deny that there is also the Creator of the digestive

system. Again when it is an admitted fact that the working system of the human body indicates the presence of a conscious mind, how can we say that there is no Supreme Being which controls the entire system of the Universe!

How have the various components, which can neither see nor hear and which constitute the Universe, have set for themselves working principles and cycles that a researcher spends his entire life for detecting any of such laws governing it?

In short, if the principle of an "Outlook on Universe" is based on factors which human intellect accepts, then looking at its very delicate and minute system of operation, it confirms the existence of a perfect Being, and through this very intellect we will, by the Grace of Allah, provide answers to doubts and suspicions in this regard.

The study of this life which has such a strict discipline and impeccability leads us towards Divine Approach to Universe. This is the first basic indication of the correctness of the viewpoint and the line of thinking to the Divine Approach. The second indication of this approach is its compatibility with natural disposition.

Let us clarify the meaning of natural disposition because when we say that Divine cognition is a natural process then we should be able to profit by it.

What is Natural Disposition?

The term "Natural disposition" is akin to "instinct" and it gives the same meaning. In man any type of feeling which is independent of training, guidance, teacher or patron is inherent and permanent and it is present in all people of all times and places. This feeling is sometimes called a natural disposition or an instinct, though instinct is a broad-based feeling which is present equally in man and animals.

A certain natural tendency is a general characteristic or trait as for example the mother's love for her child. It is a kind of feeling or emotion which is inherent in mother and it is not imparted by any teacher, patron or preacher. It is universal. Wherever one goes, one will find this instinct at every time in every type of social group, though it may be possible that it is of lesser or greater degree in certain mothers. It is also possible that one instinct can overrun another one.

Let us admit that every man loves wealth as well as happiness and security, but this love is not found equally in all men. Some sacrifice wealth on life and some sacrifice life on wealth.

Similarly at times for the sake of personal honor and dignity the father withdraws his love and affection from his daughter and buries her live, as daughters in Arabia before the advent of Islam were considered the cause of dishonor and disgrace. Therefore, anything which is inherent in man may not necessarily compel him to act accordingly, because one dominating urge suppresses another dominating feeling.

One of the signs of instinctive behaviors is the sense of pride. Anyone who acts according to his natural tendency feels within himself a sense of calmness. A mother who holds her child in her arms feels proud of it, rather

she condemns the mother who ill-treats her child. That sense of pride and that disposition of criticism are instinctive things.

Let us now see whether recognition of Allah is inherent or not.

We ask from everyone belonging to every creed or faith at every place and every time as to what are his feelings regarding the Universe. Does he consider himself to be self-contented or does he feel dependent? There is no one who can claim to be self-contented as all of them have a sense of deprivation; and this feeling is satisfied by the following two ways:

1. True sense of feeling with true satisfaction.
2. True sense of feeling with false satisfaction.

Take an example of an infant who is hungry. This feeling of the infant gets satisfied when he is suckled. And sometimes this very feeling is satisfied by means of sucking a false soother. However, in man the sense of deprivation is inherent and a reality but the question is deprivation of what? Of Divine Power or of natural strength?

The nature itself is dependent on several conditions and therefore we should depend on that Power which itself is not dependent and subservient like us to any other power.

Prophets' Mission

The function of the Prophets is to prevent man from receiving false satisfaction of his true feelings. In this regard we have before us the example of a mother who does not allow her child to take all types of food. A passing glance over the history tells us how without the guidance of the Prophets, people had to face untold miseries and hardships.

Is Obedience a Negation of Man's Freedom?

Sometimes it is thought that inviting people to the worship of Allah by the Prophets and Divine religions is to deprive man of his freedom. But one has to ponder over the fact that man has been so created that without love and affection, devotion, mutual cooperation and hoping for the best, he cannot continue his life.

The feeling or urge of love and devotion is inherent in his nature. If through the intermediary of the Prophets, this tendency of man had not been properly bridled, he would have started worshipping idols, stars, heavenly bodies, heroes and despots. Therefore, man's obedience and devotion to Allah is not against his freedom but it is a means of satiating man's inherent devotion to Allah and consequently preventing him from going astray.

Crux of the Problem

Now we revert to the crux of the problem. The Divine Outlook on the Universe and the implicit faith in Allah has an instinctive base. That is to say the awareness of dependence on the Supreme Being is inherently present in man though at times he thinks whether this Supreme Being is Allah, the Creator or it is Nature itself.

However, the main problem is the man's awareness of his dependence. The Divine Approach to the Universe is compatible with man's disposition, for it considers the entire set-up of the Universe under the control of a super-

natural power and this goes to prove the correct stand of the Divine Outlook by man.

The third important factor which supports the Divine Outlook is that man has been endowed with a feeling of love and hope as well as a sense of responsibility. If a student of a school realizes that his efforts would not go waste and that even the one hundredth part of the marks he has gained would be counted and his reasonable explanation would be considered, he would continue his studies with perfect zeal and enthusiasm.

In the Divine Outlook on Universe man believes that he is under the constant surveillance and guidance of Allah, that his explanation for his lapses is acceptable, that not even an iota of his good or bad deeds could be overlooked, that all his noble deeds are to be rewarded by Allah and that he would be compensated in Paradise for the sacrifice of his life and property.

Thus on the one hand the invisible great support of Divine Power and on the other the prevention from doubts, suspicions, lapses, acts of commission or omission repose in man's heart an ever-glowing hope.

The Holy Qur'an has condemned the following forms of faith and inclinations:

Doubtful and Temporary Tendency

1. Whenever one finds himself in a grave danger and foresees annihilation, he starts remembering Allah by imploring: "O Allah!", and as soon as that danger is over, he forgets all about it, and starts associating Allah with others and thus falls in the ditch of polytheism. The Holy Qur'an says:

When they sail in a boat, they sincerely pray to Allah with pure faith. But when We bring them safely on land, they start considering things equal to Allah! (29:65)

2. Sometimes their faith which is adopted without any reasoning, or considering the Divine signs, they follow the faith of their ancestors just like idolaters who used to tell the Prophets that they had adopted their faith in obedience to their ancestors. The Holy Qur'an condemns their blind faith and says:

They said, we found our fathers doing so. (26:74)

3. Sometimes their faith is not true but is meant for outward show. The Holy Qur'an says:

The Bedouin Arabs say, 'We are Believers'. Tell them, 'you are not believers, but you should say that you are Muslims. In fact belief has not entered your hearts '. (49:14)

4. Sometimes their faith is without action and deeds. Although these sort of people believe but they are slack in their actions. The Holy Qur'an has condemned such people at several places.

Which Faith is true?

From the point of view of the Holy Qur'an only that faith which is based on reasoning and correct mode of thinking is true and commendable. The Holy Qur'an says:

Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, or resting on their sides, and who think about the creation of the heavens and the earth and say, 'Lord, You have not created all this without reason' (3:191)

Signs of Faith in Allah

1. Hope and Feeling of Love: Anyone who knows that all his deeds are accounted for, and that his efforts do not go in waste, and also that Allah rewards him for his actions and deeds with Paradise, though He by His benign Mercy sometimes bestows upon him rewards for his good intentions too, he then leads his life with his love for Allah in a state of cheerful hopefulness.

2. Abstains from Corruption: Such a man abstains from treachery, meanness, and hypocrisy. Anyone who considers himself to be ever-present before Allah and considers Allah as Omniscient, can never practice deceit and hypocrisy.

3. Preserves His Self-respect: He, who has submitted himself to the Will of Allah and truthfully obeys His commands, can never bow down before anyone in authority, status and power. He considers everybody as he himself is.

4. He is Never in Loss: Since the man of faith benefits by his timely deed and receives an everlasting reward from Allah and pins his hopes only on Allah, he never sustains any loss at all.

5. Tranquility: If we look into the following causes of fear and restlessness, we find that faith in Allah provides a complete peace, satisfaction and a state of tranquility Causes of Fear and Worries

(a) Sometimes past lapses and bad deeds are the causes of one's fears and worries but the remembrance of Allah changes this state of mind into that of peace and tranquility because Allah is Merciful and Benevolent and He forgives sins and accepts one's repentance.

(b) Sometimes loneliness and the very thought of helplessness leads to fears and worries but the faith that Allah is Omnipresent and Omniscient changes this state of mind into that of peace and tranquility. The man believes that Allah is not only our Companion and Compassionate but He hears us, sees our deeds and bestows His blessings on us.

(c) Sometimes the aimless life and the sense of lethargy make one's mind restless but the faith in Allah removes all such fears and worries as Allah has created everything in this world with a purpose by His Wisdom in a definite quantity and number within a specific sphere.

(d) Sometimes a man gets worried that he has not been able to please everybody, and he broods over the thought that he annoyed or provided the cause of displeasure to a particular person or a group of persons, but the faith in Allah that one should only try to please Allah as honor and disgrace only come from Him removes that state of restlessness. And it is confirmed by the Holy Qur'an which says:

Remembrance of Allah certainly brings comfort to all hearts. (13:28)

Signs of Dishonesty

He who does not have faith in the real cause of the Creation, that is Almighty and All-Wise Allah, is a person, who finds himself shaky, aimless

and lonesome and concerns himself like animals and birds with the enjoyment of the comforts of worldly life only; who acts only under the pressure of the society; who considers death the last thing in life, and does not have the belief in the life after death as he does not believe in the immortality of soul; who surrenders his life to be dominated by external powers and his personal desires; who is beset with vague ideas and notions, deprivation, faults and lapses as his article of faith has not been guided by the infallible Prophets and Divine revelations, who is completely unaware of the very purpose of life.

He does not know as to why he has come to this world and why he is departing from this world. His only line of thinking is as to how his life should be spent? He does not realize the very purpose of life. He is devoid of the Divine Approach to Universe and Islamic faith.

In short, one can detect faith from the face of those who have belief in Allah and of those who have no belief in Allah.

Baseless Reasoning against Religion

Now when we have established intellect and instinct as the base of the Belief in Allah, intellect indicates that there must be someone who reveals the vast spectacle of the Universe as wherever we have seen a system of set principles it indicates its controller or regulator.

Instinct tells us that every man finds within himself dependence to a being more powerful than himself. But despite this some people have completely ignored both the factors, that is intellect and instinct and have found a weak reason for the belief in Allah. Briefly, we discuss some of these false reasoning:

Defeat of Communistic Dogmas

As the life under communism passes by, day after day, its one or the other dogma becomes defeated. As for example the Islamic Revolution in Iran revealed upon the people the failure of all communistic dogmas and put it in disgrace.

Communism says that religion is a dope for the nations. Religion makes the people lethargic, apathetic, and subservient; but we see that in Iran, religion has enthused the people with action and has not made them lethargic.

Communism claims that if anyone is morally degraded it is due to his financial weakness. Hence, if a man commits theft, the reason is that he is forced to do so because of penury. But we have seen that in Iran the dishonest government was not pauper.

According to communism the cause of revolution lies in the restlessness of the downtrodden and the hungry people and their revolting against their exploitation by the people in power. But the revolution in Iran was brought about for the restoration of human freedom, stability and for enforcing the sovereignty of Allah and not for bread and butter or for high or low prices.

If revolution had been due to the revolt of poverty-stricken people, it would have started from Kurdistan and Sistan, because these areas were more deprived. But the revolution which starts from Qum the centre of religious learning under the spiritual leadership of Imam Khumayni and

with the shouts of "Allah O Akbar" (Allah is Great) reaches its peak on the Day of 'Ashura(the tenth of Muharram) to the fortieth day of the commemoration of the Martyrdom of Imam Husayn indicates the fact that the root cause of the revolution lies in the seat of religious learning and establishing Divine justice and not in the belly.

The preference of Divine laws over the laws of secular despots is not the result of deprivation of the poor and the needy. We do not ignore altogether the poverty factor but we ask as to what was the real cause of the revolution? Revolution for abolishing poverty or establishing Islam? What a great number of people were there who were enjoying all the comforts of life but they decided to give up their comforts for the success of the Islamic revolution.

The fourth disgraceful thing about the materialistic Outlook on Universe, which is the topic of our discussion, is the ineffective and ridiculous allegation of anomalies of religion and faith which Communism has expounded by saying that the capitalists through their vested interest and reactionary agents have lured the people to remain calm under the shield of religion, for they ask the deprived people to remain patient as Allah befriends the patient people.

They say: "If some people have usurped your rights, you should keep quiet because the world itself is short-lived. The main thing is the life in the Hereafter". They ask the people not to rise in revolt but to wait for the Awaited Imam Mahdi because he himself would reform the society; or they ask the people to practice dissimulation (taqiyya) and not narrate what they see with their eyes.

In short, the capitalists implants such things in the minds of people through their stooges in the name of religion and thus by such methods prevent the people from trying to struggle for their rights.

From the foregoing you can judge yourself that all such things are ridiculous and far from logical reasoning. We thank Allah that we are in such an age that our younger people have become mature enough in their thinking to disprove the false claims and dogmas of Communism because by quickly pondering over it the Muslim youngsters ask the communists: "If the capitalists have invented religion for calming down the people, why are there certain laws in religion which empty their purse by confiscating their wealth?

Islam takes back from the capitalists everything, which they amass from wrongful means, that is exploitation, tyranny, bribery, black-marketing, high pricing, undercutting, usury, hoarding, adulteration etc. and through the sales of under-developed and deserted agricultural land. Would the capitalists invent the religion so that it could deprive them of their assets?"

Theirs is a fallacious argument because it is religion which gives a correct and effective interpretation to the various terms from which wrong conclusions are deduced and which they have changed altogether. As for instance waiting (intizar) for the appearance of the Imam of the Age does not mean that one should become silent.

Waiting for the sun to rise does not mean that we should keep sitting in the stark darkness of the night and should not light a lamp. Waiting for the

summer does not mean that we should not wear woolen clothes during winter or should not protect ourselves from the inclemency of weather. Similarly waiting for the Awaited Imam does not mean that we should give up our struggles and instead keep mum and bear hardships and cruelties.

The meaning of patience also does not mean that we should count hardships and cruelties but it means that we should remain steadfast in our struggle against the oppressors for the restoration of our rights, because Islam has ordained that anyone who gets himself killed in his struggle for the protection and restoration of his monetary rights is a martyr.

That is to say for the preservation and restoration of one's rights one should be steadfast in attaining martyrdom. It is narrated in a tradition that like the oppressor the oppressed one will also be pushed into the Hell if he had not resisted the oppressor and instead accepted oppression.

Similarly, taking the world to be insignificant does not mean that we should abandon it altogether, but it means that the value and importance of man, who is the vicegerent of Allah, is more than the world itself and, therefore, the aim and purpose of man's life should not be attaining worldly gains only.

Dr Allama Iqbal has said: "You are not for the earth nor for the heavens; the world is for you, not that you are for the world".

In short in Islam patience, perseverance and expectation do not mean that one should remain passive against the exploiters. Apart from snatching the unlawful wealth of the capitalists Islam asks the deprived as follows:

1. It is forbidden to behave towards capitalists submissively, and anyone who bows down before a wealthy person loses one third of his faith.

2. Imam Ali Riza has said that anyone who gives a warm welcome to a rich person (because of his wealth) will face Allah's wrath on the Day of Resurrection.

3. One should not respect a person because of his wealth.

4. Never par take meals at a table where only the rich and affluent people are eating their food.

5. Imam Ali Riza himself used to sit beside his slaves at the same table-cloth. Prophet Sulayman despite his exalted position used to mix up with the poor people. The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali used to sit with the poor on the ground, and the Prophets used to tend the cattle and put themselves to hard labor.

The prayer and supplication of a jobless and work shirking man is never accepted and the Holy Imam has cursed that person who lives on another person like a parasite. Hence it can be deduced that Islam has neither been sponsored by the rich people nor by those who are lazy and vagrant. This is a brief comment on the baseless reasoning of communism regarding the birth of religion, and brings disgrace on it.

Another Groundless Reasoning

Some materialists, who have no conception of the Divine Approach to the Universe which originates from inherent tendency and intellect, and incidentally consider themselves as intellectuals, offer another groundless reason for the faith of the believers whose hearts are kindled with the Divine light.

They say: "The basis of the belief in Allah is fear. Just as during infancy and childhood man is dependent on his parents in the same way he makes Allah his refuge when he grows up. People of the ancient times who were beset with dangerous happenings like earthquake, thunder-storm, and attacks by wild beasts etc. had invented for their mental satisfaction an imaginative shelter. Whenever they got frightened with such mishaps they used to put their restless soul at rest through such beliefs. Hence the belief in Allah was the outcome of fear".

Answer to Such a Reasoning

If the reason of the belief in Allah is fear the one who fears most should have more firm belief in Allah; hence those who were the first to have fears should be the first believers. But on occasions where man is not affected by fear he will naturally not be inclined towards Allah, though one can turn to Allah without any fear also.

We do revert to Allah because of fear but it does not mean that fear is the only cause of the belief in Allah. Very often man does not have any fear at all but he does believe in Allah. His intellect sees through the signs which are very minute, delicate and immaculate and which lead him to an ultimate belief in Allah.

He feels within himself to be attached with a great power and soon he realizes that as he was not created all by himself and if it had been so he would have most certainly made some improvement on himself in being more beautiful or would have made certain innovations and, besides, other beings also, like him, were not created without any set patterns Each and every individual cells and organs, which he is made of, have been fashioned with a set pattern. Therefore, there certainly is an All-Powerful Allah who has created him.

On the basis of this line of thinking and method of deducing conclusion, man does not need to harbor any fear or undergo a state of uncertainty and restlessness. His intellect and natural instinct guides him to Allah. Thus, the theory that the belief in Allah rests on fear is baseless.

As a matter of fact such baseless reasoning reminds us of a person who had found out the reason for the hot climate of Kashan when he said: "Do you want to know why the climate of Kashan is hot? In the word "Kashan" the letters "sh" are present and in the word "Shimr" these very letters are present. And the day when Shimr was in Karbala, its climate was hot and, therefore, the climate of Kashan is hot".

The psychological analysis of this reasoning of belief has been done by an expert psychologist. Indeed these so called experts can also commit errors. It is like that the higher a mountain is the deeper its tavern will be. We should, therefore, not be simply overawed by mere knowledge and if a scholar has some deep convictions in certain matters we should not blindly follow his views.

One among such scholars is Betrand Russell. He says: "Formerly I had a belief in one God but later on I thought over that when everything was created by God who created God? When I did not arrive at a definite conclusion I gave up my belief in God" To a question as to whom he

believed in, he replied, "Now my belief is that the Creator of the Universe is not God but matter".

At this point we can ask him to find out for himself, from where did matter come into being? He says that matter exists from the very beginning. Similarly we also say that Allah exists from the very beginning. Then the question arises as to why Russell did not accept the existence of the First Cause and the Omniscient Being who is Allah? Why did he believe in innumerable old and unconscious beings contained in matter?

Another example

The communists argue that unless something is perceived and comes under observation it cannot be accepted as being present, and as such Allah, angels, revelations and similar other things cannot be believed in because according to them they only recognize senses and observation as identifying media.

Now we ask as to why in historical analysis and explanation they say that several hundred thousand years ago men used to live together, hunt animals together and eat their flesh together when the foundation of government was not yet laid nor was there any sense of individual ownership.

Thereafter, an era of slavery came and long afterwards the feudal system came into existence. To our question as to whether they can touch upon or analyze that period of centuries when people led a gregarious life, they say 'no', but by historical remains one can trace those periods. Similarly we tell them that as they can trace out the history of the past events through relics and ancient monuments in the same way we recognize Allah through His creation and signs.

Thus if the principle of accepting a thing on the basis of signs and symbols is correct it will be immaterial if we trace the ancient history through historical ruins or relics or recognize the existence of Allah through signs.

The question therefore arises whether our senses and our observations are the only means of confirming a certain thing or problem or can we trace the root of the problem through signs'? If we just ponder over it a bit carefully we shall notice that most of our recognitions and confirmations are based on signs or identifying factors.

Another Baseless Argument

Some people who do not admit intellect and instinct as means of the recognition of Allah have given a different meaning to belief and reality. They say that the basis of belief in Allah is ignorance and further that whenever man is unable to trace causes of his problems he has supposed a Supreme Being for himself so that whenever they are unable to give explanation to a certain problem they just attribute it an act of that Being and hence such problems have been associated with Allah. But the time for this is now the thing of the past, and in fact nobody ever gave any credence to it, because:

(a) If the belief in Allah was based on ignorance then it would become necessary that the one who is more ignorant should have more belief in Allah.

(b) If the belief in Allah was based on ignorance then Divine Books should have encouraged people towards ignorance.

(c) If the belief in Allah was based on ignorance then he, whose knowledge exceeds and whose ignorance is reduced, would be the most faithless person, and then as and when man would keep on making discoveries and knowing the causes of incidents would keep on losing his faith gradually.

Is it possible that Abu Ali Sina, Galelio and Einstein who were discovers of many scientific phenomena and who had faith in Allah also, and their scientific expositions and discoveries would distract us from that Being, that is Allah, Who is the Creator of the laws of nature?

Suppose you have discovered a certain law governing a natural phenomenon, would it then prevent you from having a belief in the Creator of such law? If you have found a lost coin on the road-side should you not inquire about the owner of that coin? Or would it suffice that you have just found the coin?

Why Some People Ignore Allah and Religion?

The answer to this is as follows.

1. When we say that man can recognize Allah through the construction of a cell or an atom it is only meant for those who really want to believe in Allah but not for those who do not have the intention of doing so at all. To illustrate this point the following examples can be cited:

(i) Look at a man who roasts and broils meat on a gridiron and who cuts several livers in a day into slices for roasting but does not know the various veins and arteries embedded in it because he had nothing to do with knowing those blood vessels.

(ii) Look at a man who is busy from morning to evening in selling mirrors to his customers and who has disheveled hair and who never cares to groom it despite looking at the mirror several times in the day as he is only concerned in selling the mirrors and not grooming his hair.

(iii) When a man is busy cleansing with his handkerchief the glass of his watch and we ask him the time, he sees his watch again, because he was busy cleansing the watch and had not noted the time.

(iv) Look at a carpenter who makes a ladder but never does he himself mount it but for the sake of demonstration he does so several times in order to satisfy his customers.

From the foregoing examples we can conclude only one result that unless man wishes to know a thing or to draw benefit from it, he would not know it nor would he draw any benefit from it. Similarly, people do see the signs of Allah closely and minutely yet they do not have belief in Allah, because just by merely looking at the signs their intention is not to recognize Allah.

2. We all know that when from the very beginning we are favored with a blessing we do not realize its true significance and hence it loses its freshness. Similarly, when we see the signs of Allah everywhere we do not care to think about it or to realize its import because from the very start we had become used to them and as such they seemed to have lost their novelty.

Take an example of the thumb of your hand about which you have never been thankful to Allah because it has been there since your birth. But

suppose this thumb is bandaged for a while or is completely detached from your body, you will see that without it you cannot even button your shirt! (You can yourself imagine it while reading this instance).

Since the continuity of bounties leads to the forgetfulness of Allah misfortunes come to us as a warning. The Holy Qur'an says that sometime Allah inflicts hardship upon man so that he may return to Allah and ask Him for His forgiveness.

The Holy Qur'an repeatedly reminds mankind to remember Allah's blessings and bounties and we often find in the supplications of leaders of religion that they enumerate one by one Allah's bounties and benevolence, for example they say: ' It is You, O Allah Who has elevated us from lower position to a higher status, from ignorance to knowledge, from small quantity to a larger quantity, from poverty and indigence to richness and wealth and from illness to health".

3. People ignore religion because many innovations have been introduced into it by ignorant friends and wise enemies.

As for example if we offer a glass of water to a thirsty person and a fly falls down in it, that person instead of drinking water throws it away. Hence, just a man shuns water because of the fly; similarly he shuns religion because of the presence of a few unreasonable and irrational things in religion. Therefore, we should not be unmindful of those whose actions distract the people from religion.

4. Environmental Influence: The cause of man's deviation from religion and religious commands is the problem of the environmental influence. Man by his very nature and instinct dislikes the act of stealing and considers misappropriation as a bad thing, but when he is in an environment which is dominated by thieves and usurpers, he too adopts their habits.

5. Sometimes indifference to religion is due to shirking responsibility, because accepting religion means binding oneself to accept various religious restrictions and obligations. Hence some people shun religion since they want to be free from all restrictions.

They do not realize that to be so free as to abstain from following Divine commands means that they have accepted all other restrictions and all sorts of servitude. He who does not accept to be the servant of Allah is a slave of everybody else, and he who does not obey His commands must obey the commands of everyone else.

He who leaves Allah and turns to others is as if it were like one who falls from the sky to the earth. He becomes a prey to the vultures before whom he falls down.

6. Enmity: There is a certain group of people which harbors grudge and indulges in prejudice and selfishness. Such people oppose and criticize things for the sake of opposition and thereby disregard the Divine commands altogether.

7. Lack of Proper Preaching: It is also lack of proper preaching or preaching in a wrong way which makes people indifferent to religion.

8. Necessity of Religion: Man does not live without a code of conduct but the question is how he can achieve his object in life for his success,

prosperity and progress? He has, therefore, three following alternatives before him:

(i) To chalk out his line of action according to his own inclination and adaptability.

(ii) To fashion his conduct in accordance with the wishes of the other people.

(iii) To submit himself to the obeisance of Allah and seek only from Him his code of life.

(iv) The first course of action is defective because human intelligence has its own limitations and man himself is well aware of his lapses and failings. The instinctive passion drags man towards disaster and calamity at every moment.

Under such a situation will it be possible that man can still be guided by his defective thinking and limited knowledge which can one way or the other lead him to prosperity or misfortunes? The second course of action like the first one is not less faulty because the wishes of other people are too many and they have a wide range of interests and inclinations.

Apart from this, as there is a possibility of their committing errors and of becoming victim of forgetfulness and lapses, it is necessary that man should not give up his line of action and ignore his requirements and personal freedom and individuality and follow those who do not know him properly or appreciate his aspirations for long standing happiness and prosperity, and over and above when he does not know whether they are his well-wishers or not.

The third course of action is the only correct course because just as we hand over our automobile to a mechanic or ourselves to a physician we should submit our ways and means of life to Almighty Allah; our Creator Who knows everything better than we know.

The Function of Religion

In a nutshell we can define religion according to one of the scholars in the following way:

Just as we construct an automobile in the same way religion builds a man. To illustrate it with an example we have to perform the following things for the purpose of manufacturing a motor car:

(i) We find out the availability of iron ores from a mine.

(ii) We extract iron from its ores.

(iii) We make the parts of machine from iron.

(iv) We assemble these parts into a motor car.

(v) Then an expert who knows driving drives this car. These five things are also applicable to religion.

Man's Discovery: A man who forgets all about himself loses his aim of life, guidance and ultimate destination, and becomes like an animal as he considers that the sole purpose of his materialistic life is sensual gratification.

By this he becomes just like a dead body as truth has no effect on him. He is wild like a wolf, cunning like a fox, thief like a mouse and stonehearted like a tyrant. It is, therefore, necessary that this type of lost man should try to discover his ownself and find out all about himself.

1. One of the functions of religion is to state what man is and what are his characteristics? When we study the Holy Qur'an we find how Islam defines man. It says:

When your Lord said to the angels, 'I am appointing someone as my deputy on earth'. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:30)

Haven't you seen that Allah has made all that is in the heavens and the earth, subservient to you? (Surah Luqman, 31:20)

We offered Our Trust (Our Deputation) to the heavens, to the earth and the mountains, but they could not bear this burden and were afraid to accept it. Man was able to accept this offer but he was unjust to himself and ignorant of the significance of this Trust. (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:72)

. . . and I have infused my spirit into it. (Surah al-Hijr, 15: 29)

We have honored the children of Adam, carried them on the land and the sea, given them pure sustenance and exalted them above most of My creatures. (Surah Bani Israil, 17:70)

The Holy Qur'an warns man lest he should forget himself and be a loser; damage his own interest; lose his profits in his dealings and be bought by false customers at a cheaper price. Then it cites examples of victorious and defeated people and determines their types and specimens, so that man can recognize his personality, capability and disposition.

He then ponders over that if he has only been created to lead a material life and to. Satisfy his animal instinct by enjoying the comforts and pleasures of life then why has he been endowed with superb intellect and knowledge and an urge to progress and development?

2. The second function of religion is to refine the discovered ores (of human character). Man should be purified of harmful thought of oppression, follies, ignorance and polytheism. The Holy Qur'an says:

Allah is the patron and supporter of those who have embraced the belief and He leads them from ignorance and waywardness to the path of guidance. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:25)

3. The third function of religion is to make an individual perfect in character. That is, to create in him the qualities of worship of Allah, and make him abstain from evils, so that he may possess perfect human attributes.

The individual guidance and character building of people are the same which the Holy Prophet had done during the troubled days of his stay in Makkah. All those commands which do not have any social bearing come under this preview so as to reform man in all aspects with full attention.

4. The fourth function of religion is to organize the reformed individuals and to knit them into one complete pattern and to establish the universal Sovereignty of Allah in which clear-cut and perfect commands are followed This was the mission which the Holy Prophet accomplished in Madina and thereafter he deputed learned and capable people to organize various fields of activity, to acquire strength for the defense, and to make budget.

Over and above this their aim was to establish a perfect socio-political system and to define the objectives of the Islamic State so as to distinguish it from non-Islamic societies.

5. The fifth function of religion is to hand over the affairs of the Islamic society in the hands of a capable and infallible leader. Strict warnings have been given in religion against encouraging oppression, despotism and ignorance and against patronizing oppressors, despots and tyrants or groups of such people. Therefore, the handing over of leadership and power of the whole nation to a non-infallible person amounts to tyrannizing the mankind.

This is what we call a complete lay-out of religion and a true reflection of its school of thought. If we wish to condense all what is said above into one single sentence, we would then say: "Religion is a social code of life which determines, according to Divine principles of a set standard, an ideology, efforts and conduct of life".

The Reality of Monotheism and its Various Aspects

In Islamic terminology "Oneness of Allah" has very pleasant, exalted and vast meaning. Our scholars have classified it into monotheism i.e. Oneness of Being, Oneness of worship, Oneness of attributes and Oneness of deeds.

Leaving aside various terminological expressions, we first deal with Oneness of Allah. We ask our revered readers to ponder over the matter and find out for themselves at what stage of monotheism they happen to be.

Monotheism i.e. Oneness of Allah is the belief that Allah is the Lord of the mankind, He is One, He has no partner and that He is Unique in all respects and everything depends on His Absolute Being.

Monotheism is the belief in Allah which denies all temporal desires. Anyone who is lustful is out of the bounds of monotheism. The Holy Qur'an says:

Have you seen the one who has chosen his desires as his Lord? (Surah Jathiya, 45:23)

Monotheism is the belief in Allah which rejects despotic tyrants. Imam Ali Riza after accepting Ma'mun's condition of becoming his heir-apparent announced to a public gathering that he had laid down his condition for being an heir-apparent that he would not interfere in all those State affairs which involved appointments to and dismissals from public offices.

Monotheism is the belief in Allah which denounces geographical barriers and the differentiation between the East and the West, and rejects all alien creed, dogmas and systems which originate from the mind of selfish people.

Monotheism is the belief in Allah which severs all affiliations and connections which cause the Muslims to be dominated by others.

Monotheism is the belief in Allah which forbids us to obey that person whose order is contrary to the commands of Allah.

Monotheism is the belief in Allah which directs us to obey those people whose guidance has been approved by Allah.

Monotheism is the belief in Allah which directs one to worship Allah and obey His commands.

In short, monotheism means to discard and crush all types and kinds of idols i.e. the idol of internal and external egotism, the idol of line of thinking, the idol of status, the idol of temperament and the idol of wealth in the sense that all of these will not distract a monotheist from the right path and prevent him from pursuing the Truth.

Monotheism is the belief in Allah which means that no attachment and affiliation other than Allah can lay down correct course of conduct for us and that all our actions, rising, sitting etc. are for the sake of Allah.

Economics based on monotheism, the sources of production, method of distribution of produce and wealth, rights of appropriation and all other codes of conduct should be in conformity with the commands of Allah.

The army based on monotheism, that is from the point of the position of learning, skill and a good background, preparation, invasion, war strategy, offensive measures, etc. should be in accordance with the commands of Allah and under Divine obligations and not even the slightest thought of jealousy, selfishness, revenge, expropriation of territories and usurpation should trouble our mind but it should be done in the true spirit of asserting the Truth and of establishing the Kingdom of Allah as well as enforcing the Divine commands.

Our routing the oppressors, delivering the oppressed from the clutches of tyrants and persecutors, and defending their life, property and honor should be according to the commands of Allah. Above all the main objective should be to defend and safeguard the frontiers from outside aggression.

Undoubtedly, the commander-in-chief of the Islamic army should be one, who is the follower and deputy of the infallible Imam. His article of faith is the Truth. His soldiers willingly and gladly accept martyrdom. To be one of his (Imam's) soldiers is worship of Allah.

These are the characteristics of the army of monotheism. By giving reference to the past services, experience and skill one should not take any wrong advantage of the situation or violate the orders of one's superiors.

The social environment in monotheism is that one where the leader is elected not on the basis of power and strength, tribal or group affiliations, but on the principles of Divine commandments, that is knowledge and learning, piety, spirit of Jihad and martyrdom, accomplishments, trustworthiness, skill and administrative abilities.

The society in monotheism is that institution where the Supreme Ruler is Allah and in which all the people are treated equally according to the commands of Allah, and all are equal in the eyes of law, and where personal prejudices, self-aggrandizement and mutual discord and disensions are eradicated. Hence, the meaning of monotheism that has been elaborated above is correct in its completeness and vastness.

Taking this as a standard, we should now see as to which one amongst us, or which form of society, is truly based on monotheism and in what manner and by what means we can reach our goal.

The Holy Prophet said, "qulu, la ila ha il lal lah tuflihu" (Say, there is no god but Allah, you will attain prosperity and salvation). We should not take this saying lightly, because in this hadith of the Holy Prophet the ultimate result of the belief in monotheism is prosperity and salvation. The Holy Qur'an tells us that our final objective is prosperity, and we see that according to the Holy Qur'an the essence of our worship of Allah is piety. The Holy Qur'an says:

Men, worship Your Lord who created you and those, who lived before you, so that you may become pious. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:21)

Piety is not the ultimate goal but it is the means to success and prosperity. The Holy Qur'an says:

Men of reason, have fear of Allah so that you may attain eternal happiness. (Surah al-Ma'ida, 5:100)

Please give your good attention to the following wordings: According to Qur'anic words "sakhkhara lakum" and "khalaqa lakum" which mean that the entire Universe has been created for us and we have been created for the worship of Allah, so that we tread on the path of Allah. Worship of Allah is meant for piety and piety is the starting point of eternal happiness.

And according to Mufradatul Qur'an by Raghib Isfahani happiness means success and triumph. Therefore, our life is for us and we are for the worship of Allah. Worship is for piety and piety is for eternal happiness. Hence, the subtle meaning of happiness can be well understood. In other words it means victory over restrictions, restraints and overpowering the internal as well as external enemies.

In the days when I was explaining the meaning of La ilaha il lal lah (there is no god but Allah) I made on the black-board a sketch of a seed which after being embedded in the soil germinates and becomes a green seedling. There I had said that in order to get rid of the soil, that seed performs the following three functions in its germination.

(i) Spreading its root in the soil.

(ii) Deriving nourishment from the soil.

(iii) Separating itself from the sand particles.

After illustrating this example, I had said that if man wishes to achieve freedom, he should also adopt the following three functions:

(i) He should possess such belief and ideology which is based on reason.

(ii) He should achieve maturity of thought from all possible sources for his betterment.

(iii) He should eliminate all possible hurdles and obstructions so as to embrace the belief in Allah.

If anyone ignores any of these three functions he will ever remain in a condition of misfortune. If his beliefs are not firm and are not based on knowledge and if he does not take advantage of his abilities, he will not be able to dispel his opponents and ultimately will be perished like that seed which is embedded in the soil and is not capable of performing its three functions and gets disintegrated in the dust.

Factors Which Distract Man from the Belief in Allah

The following are the reasons which distract man from the belief in Allah:

(i) Despotism and Tyranny: One of the reasons of going astray is the fear of the people who are in power. The Holy Qur'an narrates about Fir'aun thus:

Fir'aun said: If you will take a god beside me, I will most certainly make you one of the imprisoned. (Surah ash-Shu'ara 26:29)

Therefore, out of sheer fear, people started worshipping and bowing before him.

(ii) Love and Faith: Sometimes the love of a certain thing causes man to forget Allah and he pins all his hopes on that thing or person. He considers him to be all in all. The Holy Qur'an says:

They obeyed the rabbis and the monks and worshipped the Messiah, son of Maryam, as they should have worshipped Allah. (Surah Tawbah, 9:31)

These self-appointed scholars used to declare things permissible by Allah as prohibitive and the prohibitive ones as permissible and because of their faith in them people used to obey them.

(iii) Forlorn Hopes: Sometimes people in the hope of receiving help and honor believed in gods besides Allah. Thus the Holy Qur'an says:

They chose idols besides Allah in the hope of receiving help from them. (Surah Ya Sin, 36:74)

They have sought honor from other gods instead of Allah!(Surah Maryam, 19:81)

In order to distract the people from the straight path of monotheism they used to lure them with their pleasant and enchanting talks, forlorn hopes and tall promises and sometimes they used to frighten them also

The Holy Qur'an says:

What you worship, instead of Allah, are no more than empty names that you and your fathers have given to certain things. (Surah Yusuf, 12:40)

In our time also for the purpose of distracting people from Islam many pleasant and high-sounding political slogans have been coined, for instance, freedom, democracy, peasants, laborers, patrons, international laws, council etc. as uttering of these names are nothing but a mere pastime.

Proofs of Monotheism

Harmony Exists Between All Creations: The best and the most simple proof of monotheism is the system of combination which exists between various creations.

The arrangement of various portions of a building or of the articles of a book or of the lines of a letter is a proof of the fact that their creator is one single person. If three artists sit separately in a corner and get busy in making a sketch of a bird and each one of them makes the sketch of different parts of the body i.e. the first one sketches the head, the second one the body and the third one the feet and if all the three sketches are joined together there will not be any harmony between them.

Thus harmony, moderation and proportional balance between all creations is the best evidence of the Oneness of Allah. Weakness with strength, offence with defense and rudeness with gentleness are so inter-related that man is simply wonder-struck. All of them are so closely harmonized that they have established a well-knit system.

Just see how the strength of the parents helps the newborn baby to overcome his weakness, how the vast expanse of heavenly bodies in the various layers of the space have held the earth so firmly; how the carbon-dioxide gas which is exhaled by man during respiration is balanced by the liberation of oxygen by plants which absorb carbon-dioxide and expel oxygen; how the structure of a camera is identical with that of a human eye and how the pupil of an eye accommodates itself to admit light inside it; how it contracts in bright light and expands in insufficient light; and how

when it is necessary the eye-brows help in making light proportionate; how the saline water in the eye and the saliva in the mouth are closely related with each other and the two different tastes are so compatible with the structure of the mouth and the eye; how the aggressive nature of man is balanced by the docile nature of the woman in order to bring about a harmony between them.

If one ponders over the natural and temperamental harmony that exists between creatures, one will notice a complete compatibility.

The Creator of a newborn baby and of the breast milk is one and the same Being, because as a consequence of the birth of a newborn baby, the mother's breast starts lactating.

Similarly the sun passes its rays down to the earth, the oceans and seas send off the water vapors up in the atmosphere, the gravitational force of the earth brings back these vapors down to earth and the roots of the plants absorb nourishment from the earth and push them upward. Are these compatibilities not indicating the presence of an infinitely Superb and Supreme Power?

The organs of every animal and its morphological structure are in accordance with its individual needs and environmental conditions.

In all animals the severance of physical attachment of the offspring from its mother is a natural consequence of its (offspring's) needs.

The difference between our knowledge and ignorance is like the difference between a drop of water and the ocean because there are innumerable minute secrets of nature and their mutual relationships that human mind has not yet been able to trace out.

An Incident: One day a young man, who after learning a few words of his lesson had become proud, asked me a question: "Why are there two rak'ats (units) in the morning prayers?" I replied, "I don't know but I am quite sure there must be some reason for it, though it may not be necessary that the reasons or explanation of all the Divine commandments are made evident to us and that too on one single day. Since sometimes the Divine commandments have a basic importance of worship and obedience to Allah, it becomes necessary for us to obey Allah.

The Holy Qur'an says:

Would that you really knew what Hell is! It leaves and spares no one and nothing. It scorches men's skin and it has nineteen angelic keepers ...Our informing you of the numbers of these angels is a trial for the disbelievers ...(Surah Mudaththir, 74:27-31)

At another place the Holy Qur'an says:

The qibla the direction which you had been facing during your prayers was only made in order that we would know who would follow the Messenger and who would turn away.(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:143)

Besides, has it not been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an that Prophet Ibrahim was ordered by Allah to sacrifice his son, Ismail so that Allah might know how steadfast he was on the path of Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

We called to him, 'Ibrahim, you have fulfilled what you were commanded to do in your dream '. Thus do We reward the righteous ones. (Surah Saffat, 37:105)

During the conversation I told this young friend that just as in this temporal world there are certain set rules and principles and without understanding them no tangible result can be achieved, similarly in the spiritual world also there are commandments of which we should take proper notice, otherwise we cannot attain intellectual maturity and ever-lasting happiness.

An Example. Suppose somebody says to you that at a distance of hundred steps there is a treasure. If you walk a distance of one hundred and ten steps and start digging the ground, you will not be able to find it.

Therefore we have to keep in view the exact quantity or number which has been told us. This minute point is established by a telephone set in the sense that even if one digit is wrongly dialed one cannot have the desired person on the telephone line to talk with.

Let me give one more example to illustrate this point. If we want to open a door with a key or to switch on a machine we cannot do so if anyone of the grooves or notches on the key do not coincide with those in the lock or machine.

Despite furnishing him with several examples I found that he had become so arrogant after reading books and acquiring education that in the matter of worship he refused to accept this principle.

Besides he also did not believe that one cannot reach perfection without the guidance of Divine revelation nor did he understand that with our limited knowledge and intelligence we have no alternative but to fall a prey to superstition and uncertainty.

Is There any Deity Besides Allah?

One thing about which the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali has drawn our attention is that if there existed any other deity other than Allah, he too must have sent his prophets, or he must have revealed some signs in proof of his divinity. Apart from that if there exists two gods and both have divine power both of them will be having limitations and if any god exists at all with limitations then he cannot be a true god, because limited power is that which at one stage reached its ultimate end and we know it quite well that limited power cannot be god itself.

Or alternatively both powers can be limitless. But if both powers happen to be limitless, both of them cannot be termed as limitless powers. In this regard I can cite an example quoted by a scholar. "If you ask an architect to construct a building which has an unlimited area, he cannot obviously make more than one building with unlimited area because for the other one there will remain no space at all".

Polytheism

Polytheism, that is to depend upon someone other than Allah and to consider Allah's creature as god and to believe in another power in contrast to Allah.

Polytheism, that is to obey any god other than Allah unconditionally.

Polytheism, that is to say any type and manner of worship which is not meant for Allah.

In the narrations made in the Holy Qur'an the following two things have been generally mentioned:

(i) Strengthening one's faith with the firm belief in Allah's Power, believing in Divine help and blessings and fearing Allah's Wrath.

(ii) To shake off one's belief in receiving help from any power other than Allah, to belie all false standards and to abolish all bases and traces of polytheism.

We read in the Holy Qur'an that Prophet Nuh had warned his deviated son that all the infidels of his time would be perished in the Deluge because of Allah's wrath. The son replied that as long the wrath of his father's Allah persisted he would perch himself safely on the top of the mountain. Just imagine the logic of the son of Prophet Nuh.

He had thought the mountain and its protection as counter to Allah's wrath. This is the glaring example of polytheism. Thus if we also, like the son of Prophet Nuh, take anybody else man or any other thing as equal to Allah, we are polytheists.

Examples of Polytheism

A person says there is no necessity of offering Salatul Istisqa (prayers for rains) as water can be stored now in dams and lakes for our needs. Another person says that it is not the time now that Allah sends down His wrath so that people are struck with famine because ship-loads of food-grains can now be had from abroad.

Still another one argues that he admits the sanctities of the religious laws but by this it does not mean that we should violate the international laws, or he says that on the face of the commands of Allah he should also take into consideration the consent of the people and as such sometimes he obeys the commands of Allah and sometimes of the people also. Such a kind of notion or view-point is in contravention to the belief in the Oneness of Allah.

In the Holy Qur'an about 200 times the words, "dunillahi" or "dunihi" have been repeated in connection with polytheism. It refers to a god other than Allah. If we want to pinpoint the true sign of a polytheist's belief, which should be correct and be according to the Holy Qur'an, the word "dunillahi" i.e. beside Allah will be more appropriate.

Hence, those who go after others and expect their honor and success from non-Divine beings and establish the laws of others instead of Allah; those who have pinned their hopes on others besides Allah and their article of faith depends on pleasing others besides Allah; and those who fear beings other than Allah and work for them have undoubtedly excluded themselves from the bounds of monotheism.

The Number of Polytheists: In the above mentioned sense the number of devout people, who have not considered any other being besides Allah as their centre of attention or have not pinned any hope on them and who are not hypocrites but honor the commands of Allah and who only enforce the commands of Allah, is very small. The Holy Qur'an says:

Most of them do not believe in Allah, they are but pagans. (Surah Yusuf, 12:106)

Anxiety, the Sign of Polytheism

A big problem of psychology is anxiety and to check worries is its main object. But in my opinion anyone who has entered the fold of monotheism and his thought and deeds are only for Allah there is no chance of his suffering from nervous exhaustion and depression.

But when the thoughts and deeds of man are not for the sake of Allah only, he is likely to suffer from neurosis. In other words as soon as a man sets his foot on the path of Allah, Allah rewards him for his deeds. Allah hears his implorations and watches his deeds and that man is the one who does not pin his hopes on anyone except Allah.

All that we discuss in our daily talks about problems that such and such person's work was hampered or not hampered, or he achieved success or was doomed to failure, or he prospered or got ruined, and besides all that psychology deals with them by saying that such and such failure was the cause of anxiety, are outside the pale of monotheism because in the belief of monotheism there is no such thing as failure.

It was immaterial for the Holy Prophet and it made no difference with him when he used to tend sheep or migrated to Madina, or took refuge in the Cave of Thaur, or was in the battlefield, or delivered a sermon from the pulpit of the Masjid, or performed circumambulation of the Holy Ka'bah or carried bricks for the construction of the masjid, or wore martial dress or ordinary civilian dress. True, responsibilities do change, but wishes do not have any effect.

On the other hand we are such that if someone in authority deprives us of our position, dress, pulpit, office or residential place we go to the extremes of grieving or on the point of committing suicide, because these things have become so loving to us or in other words these have become our part and parcel and an idol of worship for us.

In some countries the government in power put pressure on religious leaders to invoke Allah's blessings for the ruler in themasjid and sometime lure them with bribe or intimidate them to do so. Just as we have learnt from the hadith that when crimes are given appreciation the domination of the despot is strengthened and as a natural consequence it invites the wrath of Allah. As a despot becomes more powerful the commands of Allah become weakened.

Under this situation if a religious leader instead of submitting to the pressure of such despots abandons his seat, or gives up the job of sermonizing and leading the people in congregational prayers, he can relieve himself from that pressure and thereby save himself from sins. But when residential place, professional security, dress and status become the centre of attraction for him, they make him their captives.

May Allah save us, for the sake of sincere believers, from those captivities and gods (temptations) which have entered our hearts?

Signs of Polytheism

Associating anyone with Allah is the worst sign of evil and we deal here with one aspect of it:

1. Practical Effect of Polytheism Polytheism is the cause of nullifying the good deeds. According to the Holy Qur'an, man's total deeds go in waste

because of polytheism. Sometimes a small deed defeats all our efforts. Following are some examples:

(i) A student studies throughout the year but he does not appear in his examinations. His lessons remain unchecked, and though they happen to be intact, yet he loses social status.

(ii) A man who has been very particular about keeping his health but if he takes a small quantity of poison all his life long precautions become useless.

(iii) If a student kills a son of his teacher he nullifies all his good deeds despite his lifelong efforts, services and the affection of his teacher.

Thus associating someone with Allah is like taking a poison or killing a teacher's son. The Holy Qur'an says:

If people worship idols, their deeds will be turned devoid of all virtues. (Surah Anam, 6:89)

2. Psychological Effect of Polytheism It is abundantly clear that the root cause of man's anxiety is that he cannot please all people because people are in good number and each one of them expects one or the other thing from him. As he cannot possibly please everybody he becomes worried because in order to please one person or a group of persons, one will have to displease another person or group of persons.

Here the question of monotheism comes under discussion. The monotheist only knows to please one Being and that Being is Allah. It is of no concern to him as to what other people want or expect from him. By this he is naturally wellcontented. In this context the Holy Qur'an cites two examples:

(i) Can many different lords be considered better than One All-Dominant Allah? (Surah Yusuf, 12:39)

It means whether man can be happy in pleasing One Allah or he can be so in pleasing so many with varying kinds.

(ii) Allah advances the example of a man who is owned (as a slave in common) by a number of men at loggerheads, and another man who is owned by only one. Are these two alike in attribute? (Surah Zumar, 39:29)

Hence, a man who is subservient to only one person remains in peace but the one who is under the domination of many people of bad habits and temper, cannot be in peace.

It is too difficult to please others but it is Allah Who becomes pleased with His servants. In the Supplication of Kumayl we come across the following words: Ya sari'ar riza (He whose pleasure is quickly achieved!)

However if others get pleased with us at all they never forget our shortcomings. It is only Allah Who is so kind as to overlook our mistakes and shortcomings, as we recite in the Supplication of Kumayl: "O Allah! You reveal our merits and cover our faults". (See: The Supplication of Kumayl, ISP 1985)

In principle if people do not act within the sphere of monotheism or the bounds of Allah and are pleased with me, it will have no value at all. What will they do for me? They can just clap their hands or name the street after me or do similar other useless things for encouraging me. What else can they do?

Apart from this was there anyone else except Allah Who took care of me while I was still in my mother's womb? Am I not still under His care? Will I have no concern with Him on the Day of Judgement? Are all the virtues and merits not from Him? Are not the hearts of the people under His control? Then why should I forsake Him and run after frivolous things?

In short, instead of trying to please others who have varying tastes when their pleasure does not affect my past and future, it is better to please only Allah the One, Whose pleasure is quickly achieved and Who can change the people's mind for me, and with whom rest my past and future. The Holy Qur'an says:

Do not consider anything equal to Allah lest you should become despised and neglected. (Surah Bani Israil, 17:22)

We ran after people for receiving their attention throughout our life and ultimately came to the conclusion that people liked us only because of their selfish motives. It is only Allah who likes us for our own sake. Our friends make new friends and then desert us to let us remain in perpetual misery. As mentioned in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

Believers some of your wives may prove to be your enemies, so beware of them. (Surah Taghabun, 64:14)30

If it is told that some of our wives and children are our enemies it is in this very sense that some of our wives and children want us only for the sake of their own comforts no matter if we are recompensed with misfortune and ruination.

3. Collective Effect of Polytheism

In a society based on monotheism personal interests, governing laws and collective thinking are on one and the same plane. Authority, commands, laws and the path are the same and it is the path of Allah and the command of Allah and Allah is the Patron and Guardian of everybody.

But in a polytheistic society instead of one law and one direction there are several laws and directions and everyone defends his own line of direction which he has adopted for himself. The Holy Qur'an says:

In that case each god would have taken away his creatures and claimed superiority over the others. (Surah al-Mu'minun, 23:91)

That is to say in this society the lawyers defend their clients and not the truth. In this society the aim of life is not to worship Allah but to flatter the people.

The Holy Qur'an says:

Lord, when we obeyed our chiefs and elders they led us astray. (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:67)

According to the Holy Qur'an:

People are envious of each other. (Surah al-Mu 'minun, 23:91)

Hence, everyone adopts the way of his liking and seeks pleasure in it, wants to please himself without caring for the truth and falsehood. He is concerned only with his own interest, his well-wishers, and his social standing, but he does not respect his opponents even though they have reasons to be on the right side. The Holy Qur'an says:

Who have divided themselves into various religious sects, each one happy with their own belief. (Surah al-Rum, 30:32)

Domination, suppression, false propaganda and opposition are the collective signs of polytheism. The Holy Qur'an says:

Do not associate yourselves with the pagans who have divided themselves into various religious sects, each one happy with their own belief. (Surah al-Rum, 30:31-32) Do not think that only the idolater is the polytheist, but it means that you should not join the school and path of that person who sows the seeds of discord and thrusts his personal opinion, likes and dislikes on some school and deprives it from its reality and piety, otherwise you too will become a polytheist because side by side with Allah's command you introduce your own views in which you are interested.

The Effect of Polytheism in the Next Life

To enter the Hell with disgrace in the Hereafter is included in the effects of polytheism. We read in the Holy-Qur'an at several places that on the Day of Judgment the polytheists will be addressed that they followed the gods besides Allah and worshipped the deities in the hope that they would remove their sufferings. On that Day they will be told to call those deities to come to their rescue! The Holy Qur'an says:

Do not consider anything equal to Allah lest you be thrown into Hell, despised and driven away from Allah's Mercy.(Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:39)

Grandeur of Monotheism

It is the style of the Holy Qur'an that apart from chalking out a mode of action of doing good and abstaining from evil, it teaches us in parables and uses analogies which by themselves are interesting. The Holy Qur'an says that for the believers the example of Fir'aun's wife (Asiya) is so good and interesting, for despite being under alluring atmosphere she did not swerve from the right path.

She was so truthful and steadfast in her belief that all the pomp and glamour of the court of Fir'aun could not shake her faith and she achieved greater success in her belief so much so that she prayed to Allah for her salvation in the Hereafter. The Holy Qur'an says:

To the Believers, as a parable, Allah has advanced the event of the wife o f Fir'aun who said, 'Lord, establish for me a house in Paradise. Rescue me from Fir'aun and his deeds and save me from the unjust people'. (Surah Tahrim, 66:11)

We also read in the Holy Qur'an that there is a clear example of the infidel wife of Prophet Nuh. She was prevented from the right path by her lust and obstinate nature to the extent that despite being lodged in the House of revelation and being in the proximity of Prophet Nuh she went astray. The Holy Qur'an says:

Allah has reminded the disbelievers about the event of the wives of Nuh and Lut by advancing a parable. (Surah Tahrim, 66:9)

Progenitor of Monotheism

The Holy Qur'an says about Prophet Ibrahim:

Say: Allah has spoken the truth. Follow the upright rites of Ibrahim who was not an idolater. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:95)

Now we proceed with the historical events that took place in the time of Prophet Ibrahim so that we may prepare a list of his achievements by which it becomes evident that he was the loyal and noble hero of the school of monotheism.

Prophet Ibrahim was obedient to Allah in the discharge of his obligations and no power on earth could distract him or prevent him from the right path. He came out with flying colours from the trials and tribulations. The Holy Qur'an says:

When his Lord tested Ibrahim 's faith and he satisfied the test, He said, "I am appointing you as the leader of mankind" (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:124)

Merits of Prophet Ibrahim

Desecrated the Idol of Temporal Desires: Prophet Ibrahim was ordained by Allah to slaughter his beloved son, Prophet Isma'il. When he was born his father's age was hundred years. Without advancing any excuse Prophet Ibrahim obeyed the command of Allah to which he gave priority over his paternal love.

He broke the idol of personal desires and wishes. When he suppressed his sentiments and emotions and laid down his son and started slaughtering him with a knife, there came the following Divine command:

O' Ibrahim! you have fulfilled what you were commanded to do in your dream. Thus do We reward the righteous ones. It was certainly an open trial. (Surah Saffat, 37: 105)

Crushed the Tyrant Ruler of His Time: Prophet Ibrahim disagreed Namrud by shattering his vanity through logic and reasoning The Holy Qur'an says:

O Muhammad, have you heard about the one who argued with Ibrahim about his Lord for His granting him the kingdom? Ibrahim said, "It is only my Lord who gives life and causes things to die" He replied: "I am the giver of life and death". Ibrahim said, "Allah causes the sun to rise in the East. Can you make it rise in the West?" Thus the unbeliever was confounded. Allah does not guide the unjust people. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:258)

Destroyed the Idolatry of Heavenly Bodies: The Holy Qur'an says:

When it became dark at night he (Ibrahim) saw a star and said: "Is this my Lord?" But when it disappeared, he said: "I don't adore those who fade away" When Ibrahim saw the rising moon, he said: "Is this my Lord?" But when it faded away, he said: "If my Lord had not guided me, I should have certainly gone astray. (Surah al-An'am, 6: 77-78)

Severed Relations with his Relatives: Prophet Ibrahim severed relations with his relatives for the sake of Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

Lord! the idols have misled the people. Whoever follows me is my friend, as for those who disobey, you are certainly All-Forgiving and All-Merciful. (Surah Ibrahim, 14:36)

Abandoned his Wife and Suckling son: Prophet Ibrahim abandoned his wife and the suckling son for the sake of Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

O Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley near your Sacred House so that they could be steadfast in prayers. Lord! fill the hearts of the people with love for them and produce fruits for their sustenance so that they may glorify You. (Surah Ibrahim, 14: 37)

Never Cared for His Life: Prophet Ibrahim cheerfully obeyed Allah when he was thrown in the fire. The Holy Qur'an says:

O We said, O fire! be a comfort and peace to Ibrahim.(Surah Anbiya, 21:69)

The Holy Qur'an has dealt with this subject in detail but we have quoted some relevant verses only for the sake of brevity.

Deceit is Polytheism

We read in the hadith that every sort of false pretence is polytheism. Of course polytheism is of varying degrees. Sometimes it is very apparent as for instance worship of the idols, the sun, the moon and the stars, and sometimes it is so hidden that man himself is unable to detect it.

We have read in the hadith that the problem of this type of polytheism and monotheism is as difficult as perceiving the movement of an ant on a slab of stone in the dead of the night. Therefore, without the ever-present guidance of Allah and of one's own deepest consideration and quest for searching truth one cannot prevent himself from falling into the trap of polytheism.

Signs of Sincere Believer

1. Does not Wait for Any Return: The Holy Qur'an considers those people as the embodiment of virtue and sincerity who offered their food which they needed most at the time of breaking their fast to the needy ones for three consecutive days, and simply said that they did not do it in the hope of any reward, or praise or thanks. (Vide: Surah Dahr, 76: 7-9).

Therefore, anyone who expects something in return of the favor done to a third person by way of a word of appreciation is void of sincere devotion and purpose. Such a person finding no appreciation of his deed feels sorry for it. Such a person should make an appraisal of his true intentions.

2. Controls the Fury of Inherent Tendencies: The second kind of sincerity is that one is not swayed away by his inborn passions. We all have heard that when Imam Ali overpowered his enemy and laid him on the ground for severing his head from his body, the wretched fellow spat on his face out of his deepest rancor and disrespect and the Holy Imam got infuriated.

For a while Imam Ali paused till he composed himself and then he proceeded to behead the enemy. Afterwards, he explained that the reason of his making a pause was that he did not want to be swayed away by the dictates of his personal desire as the enemy had made him infuriated, hence he did not want to mar the noble spirit of Jihad as otherwise it would have appeared as an act of retaliation.

3. A Sincere Person is Never Sorry and Unsuccessful: A sincere person performs his action for the sake of Allah only and his reward remains preserved before Allah and thus he is not affected by consideration of victory or defeat, happiness or grief. As we have already said before such a man never has any anxiety or worry as these originate from unbridled desires, failures and frustrations. The object of such a man is to attain Allah's pleasure only and thus leads a happy life.

How One Can Avoid Polytheism and False Hopes?

The Holy Qur'an has severely warned against polytheism and in fact if we come out of the clutches of the Satan and on the one hand suppress our inwardly dominant temporal desires and on the other hand eradicate the external power of ruthless despots, then there will remain no question of polytheism and hypocrisy.

The causes of all our misfortunes and difficulties are polytheism, intemperate desires and despotic domination, and getting rid of all these things is the prerequisite of monotheism. It is because unless we cleanse a utensil from bad food we cannot put fresh food in it.

Thus, in the realm of monotheism the declaration of the words La ilaha (There is no god) come prior to Illallah(except Allah). In this regard the Holy Qur'an points out the following causes of polytheism:

The belief considering other things as one’s guardians besides Allah is as feeble as a spider's web. (Surah Ankabut, 29:41)

Why then have you taken guardians other than Allah when such guardians cannot benefit or harm themselves. (Surah ar-Ra'd, 13.16)

Those whom you worship instead of Allah do not have the power to create even a fly, even though all of them would come together for the task. (Surah al-Hajj, 22:73)

Do those who establish friendship with disbelievers instead of the believers seek honour? Let them know that all honor belongs to Allah. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:139)

The Holy Qur'an further teaches in parables how the notorious despots like Qarun, Fir'aun and Namrud and their coteries failed to avoid the wrath of Allah. In short the Holy Qur'an has advanced the following guidelines for the abolition of polytheism:

(i) Unraveling the Reality: By exposing the weakness and the vulnerability of polytheism it is sufficient to know that all those guardians who have no power to benefit or harm or to create or bestow honor can become the center of our hopes and aspirations!

(ii) Teaching in Parables: By teaching in parables as to how people depended on all their guardians, idols etc. and could not get any benefit from them, but Allah protected Prophet Ibrahim from the blazing fire, Prophet Yusuf from the well, Prophet Yunus from the belly of the fish and Prophet Muhammad from his sworn enemies who had surrounded his house.

(iii) Drawing Comparison: To root out polytheism the Holy Qur'an uses the method of drawing a comparison between polytheism and monotheism and warning how man falls into the ditch of total disgrace by accepting one thing for the other in place of the right and correct thing. To illustrate the point a few verses of the Holy Qur'an can be quoted below:

Is the One who can create, equal to those (idols), who cannot create anything? Why then do you not understand?(Surah an-Nahl, 16:17)

Those whom you (pagans) worship besides Allah, are themselves servants just like yourselves. (Surah al-Araf, 7:194)

In fact these are as helpless, feeble and wanting as you are. After all why have you so simply sold your honour and dignity and why are you so submissive to those who are just like you!

However, if you lose your faith in Allah you will lose your sense of honour and self-respect. On this occasion it is pertinent to mention what Allama Iqbal says.

"If a man out of his sheer blind foldedness adopted the servitude (worship) of another person, he will be like the one who possessed a grain of self-respect and freedom, handed it over to qayhobad and jamshed "

"In the servile attitude he is worse than a dog. I have never come across an instance in which one dog may have lowered his head before another dog". The Holy Qur'an says:

Can any of your idols guide you to the Truth? (Surah Yunus, 10:35)

4. Prayers, Invocation and Remembrance of Allah

The fourth important weapons for demolishing polytheism are the offering of prayers, glorifying of Allah, invocation, and the remembrance of Allah, for if each word and each sentence of it is uttered with rapt attention, it will fill the human heart with the belief of monotheism. To take an example if we ponder for a while over the following recitals:

Allah u Akbar (Allah is Great), bihawlillahi (With Allah's Power) and "iyyaka na'budu" (You alone do we worship), we shall come to know that the meaning of Allah u Akbar by any measure and standard is greater than man's power of conception worthy of looking at, hearing, saying and writing, far superior to all, and mightier than the might of all temporal powers and despots and their tricky contrivances.

bihawlillahi wa quwwatihi qqumo wa aq'ud, (I lie and rise only by the Might of Allah).

iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in (We worship only Allah). Neither we owe allegiance to the East nor to the West. We seek help only from Allah. He is All-Powerful and His Might is infinite. Whatever is on earth is His Kingdom.

He helps man with air, sand, clouds, moon and water. He has helped mankind through His angels. He has frightened His enemies and has destroyed them by hailstones on their heads and has helped the believers by pacifying them. We seek help from Allah in Whose hands is our life's existence.

In short every word of our supplication enlivens the spirit of the belief in monotheism and does away with our attachment with everything except Allah. But it does not mean that we should give up efforts and quest for learning and that we should refuse to take personal benefits from the world resources.

This is almost certain that in this book our discussions are not exhaustive, for if we have described four cardinal points for elaborating the inspiring effect of monotheism and rooting out polytheism, it does not mean that there is not the fifth point.

While teaching the fundamentals of belief these are the cardinal points which Allah has instilled in my brain. Perhaps there may be other methods of approach on this subject.

Signs of Idolatrous Nations

The Holy Qur'an says:

When Allah, the One is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Day of Judgment begin to shrink but when the idols are mentioned, they rejoice. (Surah az-Zumar, 39:45)

For example when we say that according to the commands of Allah we should oppose such an idea or person or group of persons, they become annoyed, and when we say that according to such and such international law they become joyful. This is the sign of polytheism of these people.

When we say that Allah wills they become unhappy but when we say that according to the people's will they become happy. In all matters these people have pinned their hopes on the East and the West instead of the Divine revelations.

They are attracted in things and persons other than Allah and are only interested in submitting to their passions and temptations instead of Divine commands! This is the sign of the downfall and of a nation's going astray.

When Obedience to Parents is Forbidden?

In the Holy Qur'an at five different places obedience to one's parents is greatly stressed and at four other places respect and reverence to parents have been dealt with side by side with belief in monotheism and obedience to Allah. It is so because the very existence of man is in the first instance due to Allah and at the second stage it is concerned with the parents.

This is one aspect of this issue but on the other aspect of being kind to one's parents is another important issue which has been mentioned side by side with monotheism, belief, worship, and obedience to Allah. In the ahadith (traditions) respect and reverence to parents have been so emphasized that looking at them with love and affection constitutes a kind of worship to Allah.

But in spite of all these recommendations if the parents try to distract their off-springs from the path of Allah, their obedience is forbidden and it will be incumbent on the off-springs to disobey their parents. Such disobedience has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in following two verses. The meaning and explanation of both are one and the same:

We have enjoined man, to be kind to his parents; but if they try to make you associate with Me that o f which you have no knowledge then do not obey them. (Surah al-Ankabut, 29:8)

If they try to compel you to associate Me with that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. (Surah Luqman, 31:15)

Such sort of direction from the parents' side is sometimes manifest in the shape of sympathy when they say, "O my son! If we do not obey such and such despot, we shall be deprived of our means of sustenance. Our property, status and honour will be safe by acting as their yes man".

Sometimes they castigate their sons by saying that their forefathers too were following the similar path as they themselves had obeyed the despots of their times with respect and veneration and had passed a fully satisfied life. "It is the tradition of our forefathers", they say, "to adopt such and such methods and to reject such and such procedure".

With such notions, according to the Holy Qur'an, the parents with all their dominating influence wish to put their offsprings on the wrong track of polytheism.

Thus under the circumstances when the question of belief in gods other than Allah arises, the parents should not be obeyed.

Polytheism - an Unpardonable Sin

Polytheism is an unpardonable sin. The Holy Qur'an declares in the following two verses:

Allah does not forgive the sin of associating others with Him but He may forgive other sins. Whoever believes in other gods besides Him has indulged in a great sin. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:48)

Allah does not forgive the sin of associating others with Him but He may forgive the other sins of whomever He wants. One who considers anything equal to Allah has certainly gone far away from the right path. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:116)

Thus the benevolent will of Allah is for those whom He wants to pardon and the will of All-Wise Allah is related to man's piety and virtuous deeds.

Counter-measures against Polytheists

It is imperative that we should not be unaware of those whose focus of attention is on gods other than Allah and whose endeavors are directed towards defeating the purpose of the obedience to Allah. Their main objective is to raise themselves and to strengthen the position of their followers.

It is because if we do not follow the path of Allah, we shall attract the attention of all such groups of people. We shall be like blind creatures, and shall fall into their trap and they will devour us like cannibals, who after fulfilling their mission will leave us in the lurch and will go after chasing other victims like us.

The revered teacher martyr Murtaza Mutahhary used to advise us to recite often the following piece of supplication: "O Allah! Whosoever abandoned the righteous path of Yours and entered into a different fold, got defeated and whosoever went after other gods besides Allah suffered a terrible loss".

The esteemed readers should please pay their attention towards the under-mentioned established facts:

Man should choose one of the following three alternatives:

(i) That path which man determines by his own free will.

(ii) That path which others fix for him.

(iii) That path which Allah chooses for him.

The first path is not correct because we decide to act on one day and on the second day we think that our decision was wrong. Actually, it is certain that owing to lack of proper knowledge and under the influence of inborn tendencies we cannot select a right path from amongst the hundreds of paths.

The second path is also not correct because according to the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali: "Since my mother gave birth to me as a free man why should I become the slave of anything whatsoever?" and therefore blind following is in itself a form of polytheism. The Holy Qur'an says:

If you obey them, you shall most surely be polytheist. (Surah al-Anam, 6:122)

Now remains only the third path which is the path of Allah (sabilillah). The Holy Qur'an says:

This is My path and it is straight; follow it and do not follow other paths which will lead you far away from the path of Allah. Thus, does Allah guide you so that you may become pious. (Surah al-Anam, 6:153)

He has sent the Book to His servant and has made it a flawless guide for mankind. (Surah al-Kahf, 18:1)

Muhammad, you are a Messenger and you follow the right path. (Surah Ya Sin, 36:3-4)

O Lord! Keep us on the right path the path of those upon whom you have bestowed favors, not (the path) of those upon whom your wrath is brought down, nor of those who go astray, (Surah al-Fatiha, 1:6, 7)

And we would certainly have guided them in the right path. And whoever obeys Allah and the Prophet is with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favors. From among the Prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good, and how an excellent company are they! (Surah an-Nisa, 4:68, 69)

In short this path is the path of obedience to Allah and this path is the path which has come down to us from the Infinite Knowledge of Allah through the medium of Divine revelations which have been conveyed to us by infallible Prophets, the Holy Imams and just and upright jurists.

Now that the path of Allah has been fully defined, we should show our reaction to the other paths and schools, otherwise people would take wrong advantage of our lethargy and would try to distract us from the path of monotheism.

Allah orders the Holy Prophet to keep aloof from the pagans. The Holy Qur'an says:

The pagans do not have any right to establish the Mosque of Allah. (Surah Tawba, 9:17)

After it was made clear that the pagans are to be the dwellers of Hell, the Prophet and the believers should not have sought forgiveness from Allah for them even if they may have been relatives. (Surah Tawba, 9:113)

Prophet Ibrahim and those with him are the best examples for you to follow. They told the people, 'We have nothing to do with you and with those whom you worship besides Allah. We have rejected you. Enmity and hatred will separate us forever unless you believe in One Allah'. (Surah al-Mumtahinah, 60:4)

Justice

In the first chapter we have dealt with world-view, monotheism and polytheism. Now we deal with justice which is the second fundamental principle of belief.

It is through the wisdom and intelligence with which we have been endowed by Allah that we differentiate between a good and a bad thing and we understand that oppression is a bad thing and justice is a good thing.

It is our belief that Allah does not do any harm to us nor does He oppress us.

The Causes of Injustice

(i) Ignorance: Sometimes ignorance becomes the cause of oppression as for example man does not know that there is no difference between a white race and the Negroes and hence a white man under his feeling of superiority oppresses the people belonging to the black race.

Thus by his ignorance and defective thinking a man starts doing things which result in oppression and persecution. But how the Almighty Allah Who is above all defects such as ignorance and Whose Knowledge is infinite, can do an act of oppression!

(ii) Fear: Sometimes it is fear which is the cause of oppression as for example one strong power is scared of another strong power which is its enemy and knowing that if it does attack the other power, the same would attack it and therefore in order to forestall this possible danger it commits oppression by making an attack on the other power.

Similarly a despotic ruler in order to be in a formidable position persecutes the people who want freedom from his oppression. But the Almighty Allah has no one as His rival so as to indulge in an act of oppression'

(iii) Wants: Sometimes the cause of oppression is based on one's sense of deprivation and thus from the psychological point of view one is obliged to an act of oppression for fulfilling his wants.

(iv) Meanness: Sometimes it is the inner meanness that some people oppress others or when they see the deprived and oppressed people, they derive pleasure in seeing them so.

After knowing the various causes of oppression you can decide as to which one of these can be attributed to Allah? In this context, the Holy Qur'an says:

Allah does not wish injustice for any of His creatures.(Surah Ale Imran, 3:108)

How could it be that Allah Who commands us for doing justice can Himself be an oppressor? The Holy Qur'an says:

Allah commands people to maintain justice, kindness, and proper relations with their relatives. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:90)

How is it possible that Allah Who commands man who is weak and who leads his life under the dictates of his unruly passions, not to become the cause of injustices if he receives injustice at the hands of his nation, may Himself Who possesses unlimited power and Who is not under the domination of any instinct, perpetrate injustice?

The Attributes of Allah

The acquiring of knowledge about the Attributes of Allah is closely related to our knowledge of recognition of Allah. As for example just as we trace the writer from his writing as well as from his style of writing and identify him by particular words and phrases which he uses as his style and which indicate his mental attitude also, in the same way every creation performs the following two main functions.

(i) Identifying its creator

(ii) Projecting the attributes of its creator and explaining the objective of its creation.

Justice-One of the Principles of Religion

When Almighty Allah possesses innumerable attributes, e.g. Wisdom, Knowledge and Power of creation why is it said that justice is one of the principles of religion? Why is it not said that first the Belief in monotheism and then existence, or first the Belief in monotheism and then Knowledge? But on the contrary it is said first the belief in monotheism and then justice!

The answer to this question is as follows:

A small section of the Muslims known as Ash'ari sect do not consider that Allah is Just. They think that whatever Allah has done is correct no matter it may be wrong or cruel. Further, the Ash'arite say that if Allah sends Imam Ali to Hell and his assassin the accursed Ibn Muljam to Paradise, nothing can stop Him, He can do so.

But we do not accept this logic as we consider Allah's Justice as one of the cardinal principles of our faith and according to Qur'anic reasoning and our own commonsense we say that all the acts of Allah are based on Justice and Wisdom and that Allah does not commit any act of cruelty or does anything wrong.

Moreover the belief that Allah is Just plays the following important role in building man's personality:

Advantages of Believing in the Justice of Allah

Self-restraint: From the point of view of self-control and abstaining from sins especially when man knows that his words and deeds are in the knowledge of Allah and not even a fraction of his deed however small it may be ignored from being taken into account, and that he will be paid back for his noble and evil deeds, he will then not consider himself independent in this world (Many Qur'anic verses can be cited in this behalf).

Cheerful Outlook: Anyone who has belief in the Justice of Allah in all worldly affairs possesses a cheerful outlook of life and as such when he considers Allah to be just he has cogent reason and a satisfactory answer of the unpleasant things. He accepts the unpleasant things without hesitation. Such a person never suffers from disappointments and despair.

Justice Plays its Role in Individual and Collective Life: The faith in the Justice of Allah helps to lay the foundation of justice in individual and collective life. Such a person prepares himself to accept justice in his personal and social life.

The Meaning of Justice

In the discussions on justice the basic problem is to give satisfactory answer to its criticism. We would present some explanation in the light of Qur'anic verses and the traditions.

(i) The first point is that Allah is Just and Allah never deprives anyone of his rights and according to the rationality of the laws, Allah bestows His Kindness on all His creatures and never does Allah oppress anybody.

Now we can see whether there exists somebody's right on Allah or whether there is any right of the creatures from the very beginnings so that cruelty has arisen out of the suppression of this right?

Were we present beforehand or did we have something beforehand which has been taken away from us? True, there is some differentiation between the creatures. Some are minerals, some are plants, some are animals and some are human beings, but none of these creatures possessed any existence or right before its birth and which is supposed to have been usurped.

Take for example a big carpet which we cut into small pieces. It will then be said that this carpet which originally was big has lost its originality of being big by having been cut into pieces. But in the case of a carpet which was already made small it cannot be complained as to why it has been made small because before that it had no existence at all and when it was brought into existence it was made small already.

Thus this small carpet from the beginning had no quality of being big so that it was deprived of something which it possessed.

Allah, the All-Wise, has created all his creatures with difference when none of them had existed beforehand or had any claim or right. Allah established a system of lifecycle with cause and effect and set a particular line of action for every creature.

He never makes any discrimination between His two creatures or two nations in as far as His expectations from them are concerned in regard to their obligations and responsibilities. Similarly His reward or punishment is also based on justice for all.

He has taken into consideration the respective capabilities and capacities of each creature in His commands and accordingly He has fixed proportionate punishment for each so that there is no partiality or injustice done to anyone of his creatures.

Again take an example of a factory which manufactures spare parts of small machine and tires of big motor cars also. Would you brand the factory owner tyrant because he manufactures small parts and big tires? Or can the small machine parts themselves complain of the differentiation? The answer to this is certainly in negative.

It is so because in this Machine Age we need machine parts as well as tires. But there was a time when none of them existed before and the factory owner made them or brought them into existence according to the need of the time for two different functions. Here the kind of cruelty exists only when the machine parts would bear the burden of tires.

Now that when each one of them were brought into existence for its specific purpose and functions and no extra burden was put on it beyond its capacity the question of cruelty does not arise at all.

At this stage when the meaning of justice and cruelty has been abundantly clarified it is necessary to ponder over the following important point:

At every place and every occasion the concept of justice is not equality. For example, if a teacher without taking into consideration the abilities and the hard work of each student gives equal marks to all of them, he actually commits cruelty.

Similarly if a physician gives the same medicine to all of his patients without considering the nature of their diseases and conditions he does the same cruelty. In both these examples the demand of justice is that the teacher and the physician should treat his pupils and the patients differently according to their merits and ailments respectively.

It should not admit any consideration, recommendation, favourtism etc, but this different attitude of treatment in different cases is according to the demand of the occasion. It does not come under the definition of cruelty.

(ii) The second point is that the objections to the Justice of Allah are only motivated by hasty decisions. Some of the examples are given below:

Suppose an Islamic Government out of necessity and in consideration of public welfare takes a decision to build a forty-five kilometer long road as every road has its utility for providing a means of communication for the smooth flow of traffic and for the convenience of pedestrians, but by laying down each and every road people have to undergo some sort of hardship until the time compensation for the demolition of houses and the construction of new houses at alternate places is affected.

Thus for the sake of avoiding hardship of a handful of people the overall interest of the people and the program for the public welfare cannot be ignored. In Islam despite the importance of individual rights and ownership of the people the overall rights of the society have been greatly emphasized.

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali said to Malik Ashtar. "Call those people who have hoarded the things of public utility and remind them of doing good and abstaining from evil and if they still do not pay heed to your advice, bring them to task". He further said: "Hoarding is useful to a hoarder only, but it is harmful to the good of the society".

At yet another place, the Holy Imam said: "In the matter of administration your attention should be towards the comforts and benefit of the common people irrespective of the annoyance and displeasure of a selected few". (See: Letter 53, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1985)

An Incident: A man had a pet dog. He went out to fetch something from the bazaar leaving his infant child in the care of his dog. When he returned to his house his dog welcomed him outside the house with blood-stained mouth.

He thought for a moment that the dog had devoured his child and under the heat of passion he fired his gun and killed the dog there and then and went inside hurriedly. There he found his child hale and hearty.

In fact a wolf used to visit the town and since the door of his house was wide open it went inside and wanted to devour the child. The dog jumped upon the wolf and in a grim battle he overpowered it and tore it into pieces

and thereby saved the child from the wolf's clutches. But the man in his extreme haste fired at his faithful dog which had saved the life of his child.

The man repented of his action and came to rescue his dog but it had already died. The man said that he looked into the eyes of his dog which were lamenting over his wisdom and saying: "O man! How hasty you happen to be? You make a hasty decision.

You should have first entered the house and seen for yourself the true situation. Why have you killed me? ' After this tragic event the man wrote an article captioned "O man! How hasty you are in taking a decision!"

There may be some people who may have prayed for something and it was not granted, but afterwards they thought that it was better that their prayers were not granted.

The Dangers of Hasty Decision

The Holy Qur'an warns man against taking a hasty decision as often man's action is based on baseless thoughts and speculations. There are many things which appear to be harmful but actually they are of benefit to man and similarly many things appear to be very good but actually they are harmful to man.

As for example the Holy Qur'an says about Jihad that man apparently considers it to be not good but actually it brings good to him.

Fighting is made obligatory on you but you dislike it. You may dislike a thing yet it may be good for you; or a thing may haply please you but may be bad for you. Only Allah has knowledge, and you do not know. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:216)

Fighting for the sake of Allah perfects man's abilities and brightens his capabilities. Those who put on airs and those who are men of action are distinguished in the battlefield. Fighting unites the scattered forces which are dedicated to the common cause and confers upon man honor and dignity. Basically fighting is the purpose of life for the people who have been oppressed and tyrannized.

The Holy Qur'an says:

It may be that you dislike a thing though Allah has placed abundant good in it. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:19)

If we look into the meaning of the word "husban" and collect its derivatives we learn that the Holy Qur'an warns that we should not think such and such thing, guess such and such thing, and conjure such and such thing. It tells us about things which contradict the decisions cursorily and hastily taken.

We read in the Holy Qur'an about the angels that, as they did not possess thorough knowledge about man, they pleaded to Allah that as they already worshipped Allah why He was creating man. But since Allah had willed to appoint His vicegerent on earth he bestowed upon man knowledge and brought out a stunning spectacle and established that their (the angels) decision about man was a hasty one.

In short, if we doubt about the Justice of Allah and say that if Allah is Just why and how such and such thing happened, then we should keep in mind that our speculations and decisions are mostly false and wrong

because in most of the cases the causes and the effects of problems remain hidden from us as our knowledge and experience are very limited.

It is for over several centuries that we have been considering the existence of forests as useless, but with the passage of time we have now realized that we obtain a number of useful things from these very forests.

Had not the people been saying for a long time that the glands in our body are quite useless? But now they say that these glands produce in the blood useful cells technically called phagocytes which devour the invading microbes in our body.

For years people thought that vermiform appendix, the blind pouch at the junction of the small and the large intestine was a useless thing but nowadays it is claimed that this appendix plays an important role in the prevention of cancer.

If we are reading a book which deals with highly important subjects and we come across a difficult word whose meaning is not known to us, we should not arrive at a hasty decision about the book and should not blame its author, but on the contrary we should review our understanding of the meaning of that word.

Now that we have comprehended the true meaning of justice and that our criticism of it is based on our superficial and hasty decision, we deal with the third point, that is, why we should try to know the causes of our troubles.

(iii) The third point is that while counting our troubles we altogether ignore our own doings and blame Allah for all that. We complain to Allah and say, "O Allah! if you are Just why am I faced with these troubles?"

Obviously many of the troubles and hardships are due to our own faults as for example if we do not take care of our health by hygienic methods we are sure to fall sick. Similarly according to the principle of doing good and preventing others from doing evil and if we do not prevent the evils the evil doers will overpower us and in that case our supplications, implorations and invocations would be of no use. On this subject too we take the guideline from the following verses of the Holy Qur'an:

Whatever misfortune befalls you is a consequence of your own deeds. (Surah ash-Shura, 42:30)

When We let the people taste mercy, they rejoice in it, but when some misfortune befalls them because of their own doings they at once become desperate. (Surah Rum, 30:36)

As for man, whenever his Lord tests him by bestowing favour on him and blesses him, he says, 'My Lord is kind to me'. But when He tests him by stinting his means of living, he says my Lord has disgraced me. (Surah al-Fajr, 89:15-16)

As a matter of fact we should try to find out the cause and reason of our misfortunes and afflictions within ourselves and in the latter part of the preceding verse as we read, "Since wealth does not necessarily guarantee everlasting happiness then why do you not honour the orphans, or urge one another to feed the destitute?" Thus your carelessness resulted in the wrath of Allah. This verse too tells us about our deeds being the cause of our misfortune and deprivation of Allah's Mercy. The Holy Qur'an says:

Eat of the lawful and good things which Allah has provided for you and give thanks for His favours if it is He Whom you worship (Surah an-Nahl, 16:114)

In this verse Allah tells of a place where Allah's blessings and bounties were in abundance but its inhabitants became ungrateful to Allah and thus became guilty of infidelity. And Allah plunged them into hunger, poverty and terrible fear. This verse also establishes that ungratefulness to Allah becomes the cause of afflictions.

We have already mentioned before that the misdeed of the people is the cause of their troubles and afflictions and consequently Allah's wrath befalls them. Here the following two questions arise.

(i) We see that those who indulge in all sorts of misdeeds, cruelties and oppression are leading a very prosperous life! Why is it so?

(ii) We say that it is due to our misdeeds that misfortune and afflictions befall us but those people whose misdeeds are even worse than ours are not subjected to any afflictions! Why is it so?

In the eyes of Allah, all the people are not accounted for in the same way, because:

(i) Allah punishes some people or a nation at once.

(ii) Allah gives a time to some people or a nation.

(iii) Allah does not punish a certain group of people or a nation at all and despite their misdeeds they lead a comfortable life until the Doomsday as according to the Divine Outlook on the Universe and life this world is not separated from the Hereafter.

It is possible that a teacher may be having different standards of reprimanding his pupils. He may punish some at once as a result of his anger, but he may leave some alone for a certain period of time; and against some who are the worst he may take no action at all, and leave them to themselves until the end of the session for the purpose of awarding the marks.

This sort of categorization is based on wisdom endowed by Allah because all the guilty ones are not equally responsible nor the nature of their deeds and mentality is similar so that we may deal with them equally from the point of view of punishment.

Sometimes the teacher reacts violently on the negligence of one of his best pupils because he did not expect such negligence from his best pupil while in the case of his unworthy pupils he does not crack down on them severely.

We read in the Holy Qur'an that Allah on certain occasions reprimanded his Prophets and Messengers for their actions though these were not under the commitment of sins because He would not have expected of so august a personage an unexpected action, but we read about the common people differently. The Holy Qur'an says:

We destroyed the inhabitants of certain towns only when they transgressed and did not repent before our deadline.(Surah al-Kahf, 18 59)

It is explained that Allah does not hasten the punishment for those who commit the sins by putting them into misfortune but from the side of Allah

there remains a deadline within which they can repent of their misdeeds. The Holy Qur'an says:

They want you to bring upon them their punishment without delay. Allah never disregards His promise. One day for Allah is equal to a thousand years for you. To how many unjust towns have we given respite and then seized with torment. (Surah al-Hajj, 22:48)

I granted temporary respite to the unbelievers (so that they would repent, but they did not). At last I seized them with a terrible retribution. (Surah ar-Ra'd, 13:32)

However, Allah gives the following reasons for His giving respite to the unbelievers:

The unbelievers must not think that our respite is for their good. We only give them time to let them indulge in their sins, and suffer an ignominious doom. For them there will be a humiliating torment. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:178)

After the martyrdom of the Chief of the Martyrs, Imam Husayn, when the accursed Yazid thought himself victorious and successful, the revered sister of the Holy Imam, Lady Zaynab recited this very verse of the Holy Qur'an and pointed out to him that his seeming victory, freedom, comfort and power were only increasing the burden of his sins so that these should become the source of terrible torment for him as the Holy Qur'an says that Allah provides the people greater comfort so that they should become used to it and then He strikes them suddenly with a painful torment. The Holy Qur'an says.

When they neglected what we exhorted them, We opened to them the gates to all the worldly gains so much so that they became immensely rejoiced with that and then we caught them suddenly and they became utterly surprised and dejected. (Surah al-An'am, 6:44-45)

Such sort of people are like those who climb a tree higher and higher and think that they are getting more successful but when they fall down from it they realize that their going up was the beginning of their torment. Thus Allah treats some people in the similar way save those who have the capability of reforming themselves. The Holy Qur'an says:

Evil has spread over the land and the sea because of corruption and hence, Allah will cause some people to suffer so that perhaps they will return to Him. (Surah ar-Rum, 30:41)

In answer to the question as to why people are in comfort despite their flouting the Divine commands and why some receive punishment on that account, the above-mentioned verses from the Holy Qur'an will suffice.

In this context we would take the opportunity of referring to some ahadith (traditions) which warn the people to fear Allah if despite their sins they have not been faced with Allah's wrath so that the matter may not go too far away and they may lose a golden chance of retrieving and the punishment is meted out to them in the Hereafter by their being thrown into the Fire of Hell.

It is like that sometime a patient reaches such a stage of his disease that the physician gives up his efforts by losing all hopes and he then issues no instructions to the patient and allows him to eat whatever he likes whether it

is harmful to him or not. Thus there are people who have committed many sins and to whom Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

Act as you wish; Allah is Well Aware of whatever you do.(Surah Ha Mim as-Sajdah, 41:40)

The Holy Prophet also when became disappointed with the people used to say:

My people, do as you wish and I will do what I believe.(Surah Hud, 11:93)

From the supplications of the Holy Imams we often read the following words. "O Allah! Do not leave me on my own".

In short Allah's wrath befalls the transgressors whom worldly comfort and pleasure prevented from getting warned and the punishment of the Doomsday awaits them eagerly.

(iv) The fourth point is that sometimes man despite the fact that he had not committed any sin or fault becomes afflicted with troubles. What is the analytical approach of the Holy Qur'an about the Justice of Allah?

Explanation: Allah's putting people on trial has been mentioned about twenty times in the Holy Qur'an. Thus one of the methods of Allah putting man on trial and hardships have been described above are just the means of that trial. Similarly, happiness and pleasure are also one of the means of trial. The Holy Qur'an says:

We shall test you through fear, hunger, and loss of life, property and crops. Muhammad, give glad tidings to the people who have patience. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:155-156)

Here the following points should be given due consideration:

(i) Does Allah not know the type and kind of man that He puts him on trial?

(ii) What is the means of trial?

(iii) People's reaction to unpleasant incidents!

(iv) Method of overcoming the difficulties.

The First Question: Obviously our trial is not for the purpose of His knowing our state of mind, mentality and reactive tendency because Allah already knows all this. He knows how we think and how we react but the purpose of the trial is to make us react by counteraction so that according to our deeds the question of recompense with reward or punishment is determined, because Allah never rewards or punishes a person on the basis of His Knowledge about his being good or bad, but He bases His decision on the deeds performed by that person.

The Second question: We said earlier that pleasant and unpleasant happenings are the source of man's trial. The Holy Qur'an says:

We test you with both misfortune and blessings. (Surah Anbiya, 21:35)

You (believers) will certainly be tested by the loss of your property and lives. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:186)

The Third Question: A friend of ours says that the people who face ordeals and misfortune can be divided into the following four groups:

1. Those when confronted with unpleasant incidents start complaining and finds fault with Allah's Justice, His Grace, Wisdom and His method of working things in this Universe. The Holy Qur'an tells of such a group of

people as follows: When misfortune befalls him, he is perturbed. (Surah al-Ma'arij, 70:20) It means that when misfortune befalls such people they start grumbling and crying.

2. Those who bear hardship with patience and forbearance and they only declare: We are the servants of Allah and to Him we shall return. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:l56)

3. Those who exceed the second group in this respect as these people not only remain patient and steadfast but they also thank Allah about what befalls them . We recite in Ziyarat 'ashura as follows: "O Allah! I thank you in the same way as the companions of the Holy Imam Husayn had done".

Indeed, there are people whose main ambition is to bear hardships and martyrdom in the path of Allah and when they achieve their goal, they offer their sincere gratitude to Allah.

4. Those who are on a still higher plane than those of the third group and who not only do not complain or show patience and steadfastness but they also yearn for bearing hardships and misfortune.

We read in the Holy Qur'an that when the companions of the Holy Prophet asked him to provide them with means and materials (horses, swords etc.) for Jihad and the Holy Prophet said that he had no such means available with him, they returned crying that they had not been able to lay their lives for the cause of Islam. The Holy Qur'an says.

Those who come to you (Muhammad) asking to be taken to the battle, but you cannot find the necessary means for them, are exempt from the duty of fighting for the cause of Allah and they go away in tears grieving that they are not being able to keep the cause of Allah. (Surah al-Tawbah, 9:92)

People generally react to unexpected incidents very violently. If you hand over a peeled onion to a child, he shouts as soon as he puts it in his mouth and throws it away because he feels uneasiness in his eyes, but the father of the child goes out in the market and buys the onions for the kitchen use. The hardships in life are like that. One runs away from them while the other welcomes them.

The Fourth Question: We have said that Allah is Just, and our misfortunes and sufferings are sometimes for our trial, so that our inner faculties become perfect. Now let us find out what we should do in order to come out successful in our misfortunes. Here also we have to seek guidance from the Holy Qur'an.

Methods of Solving the Misfortunes

(i) To Have a Divine Outlook of the Universe The Holy Qur'an has praised the people who show patience. Since they consider the worldly affairs subservient to Divine control, and when they were in difficulties they say that they are for Allah, and they are only short-lived; they do not demand anything from Him; their coming in this world and all the bounties are from Him alone. They are only His trustees.

This world is not their permanent abode; it is a passage for the next world (the Hereafter). On arrival of death they shall return to Him, and shall not be perished. They exist in this world but there will be no change in their existence after death; only a place of their abode will be changed.

This type of outlook on Universe prepares the man to face the hardships and difficulties in an appropriate manner. This outlook is reflected by the following Qur'anic verse:

We are the servants of Allah and to Him we shall all return.(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:156)

(ii) Familiarity with the Ways of Allah The Holy Qur'an asks us whether we should like to attain Paradise bearing hardships and making efforts like the other former nations who exercised patience in the extreme state of unpleasantness! Would we think that without experiencing all these things we would attain Paradise though like the people of the former nations, we have not yet experienced the ordeals like hunger, poverty, sickness, earthquakes, etc.!

The Prophets as well as the believers only awaited Allah's Mercy to rescue them from all their troubles. The Holy Qur'an assured them of Allah's help to come to them ultimately and says:

Do you think that you will find your way to Paradise without experiencing the kind of suffering others have experienced before you? Distress and afflictions battered them until the Messenger and the believers sadly said, 'When will Allah send help?' Certainly Allah's help is near.(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:214)

This verse of the Holy Qur'an points out to the fact that in the long period of history believers in Allah had to undergo great sufferings. Now that it is our turn to suffer as it is evident that the grinding wheel of time has to repeat its cycle anyway. It is the normal way of history that it has to repeat the events.

The Holy Qur'an at a number of places says to the Holy Prophet to look into the condition of such and such groups of people so that they may not get the impression that they are not the only persons to be afflicted by sufferings.

Indeed, if man understands that the afflictions and sufferings are the result of a process of a general rule; he will be in a better position to accept them and exercise patience. You observe fast during the month of Ramazan without any difficulty because it is commonly done by everybody during that month. But if in other months you have to observe fast, you will find it difficult to do so.

The Holy Qur'an which gives command for observing fasts says that other nations before you also observed fasts.

The knowledge of the past events of history helps man to bear things with patience and similarly the knowledge of the future happenings too helps to strengthen one's capacity of exercising patience. The Holy Qur'an says:

Prophet Khizr said to Prophet Musa: How can you remain patient with that which you do not fully understand. (Surah al-Kahf, 18:68)

Thus the thing that enhances man's power of exercising patience is the knowledge about the patient people and their method of exercising patience. Knowledge about the patience and steadfastness of the previous people is an effective means to face misfortunes and afflictions. The Holy Qur'an has mentioned number of such things and has cited the examples of patience of

the people of former nations. The Prophets of Allah used to say to their adversaries as follows:

We shall bear with patience the hardships you inflict upon us. (Surah Ibrahim, 14:12)

When the magicians, who were called by Fir'aun to humiliate Prophet Musa, realized his righteousness they embraced his faith and despite Fir'aun's threats and intimidations replied as follows:

We cannot choose you in the face of the clear testimony we have received, and over Him who created us. So do what you are determined to do. All that you would do will only be confined to our short-lived life on earth. (Surah Ta Ha, 20 72)

Hence, they meant to tell Fir'aun to do whatever he wanted. They would endure all the misfortunes that he inflicted upon them as they had discovered the right course leading to Paradise and were determined not to give up their stand.

(iii) Depending only on Allah The remembrance of Allah and the belief that He hears our implorations, watches our deeds and solves our problems by rescuing us from afflictions is like looking only at Allah. Allah in the Holy Qur'an says to Prophet Musa and Prophet Harun as follows:

Be not afraid; I am verily with you all the time and I hear and see. (Surah Ta Ha, 20:46)102

Allah commanded Prophet Nuh: To build the Ark under the supervision and guidance of hisLord. (Surah Hud, 11:37)

As soon as Prophet Nuh started building the Ark, the crowd of the infidels which passed by him made a fun of him and passed sarcastic remarks by saying that the Prophet had turned a carpenter but Prophet Nuh paid no heed to their taunts which became the means of his steadfastness, and reminded him that he was present before Allah and that Allah was supervising his work. Such firm determination and spirit of steadfastness instils a new life in man.

(iv) Concept of Reward and Punishment The fourth thing that inculcates in man the spirit of steadfastness is the concept of reward and punishment because forbearing the hardships in this world ensures a big reward in the Hereafter. The Holy Qur'an gives frequent examples in this regard.

(v) To Seek Help Through Prayers and Patience The fifth thing which makes a man steadfast is to seek help by Prayers, supplications and patience. The following verses of the Holy Qur'an asks us to take the support of prayers and patience:

Help yourselves (in your affairs) with patience and prayers.(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:45)

Believers, help yourselves through patience and prayers. Allah is with those who have patience. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:153)

In Surah al-A'raf, 7:128, also it is said that we should seek help from Allah.

Besides, the traditions too indicate that in the face of difficulties Imam Ali used to get himself busy in prayers. Prayers bring the small one nearer to the great one and makes the. weakest one the strongest, and creates serenity

and satisfaction. The following verse says that remembrance of Allah creates serenity of the heart:

Remembrance of Allah certainly brings comfort to all hearts. (Surah ar-Ra'd, 13: 28)

The gist of this discussion is that Allah is Just and whatever hardships befall us are from Allah; and they are for the purpose of putting us on trial and as already mentioned before, the people who face hardships are divided into four different categories. The course of action which leads us to success has also been stated.

(v) The fifth point is that the doubt about the Justness of Allah arises out of our misgiving and wrong conclusions as without pondering over the thing in its right perceptive we attribute our objections to Allah. As for example we know that death is the ultimate end of man's life and yet we object to Allah as to why such and such man died?

Sometimes we assume that this world is an everlasting abode and yet we complain as to why people die of floods, earthquakes, diseases etc.? Then we assume that this world is the place of comfort and we complain as to why we are afflicted with hardships and difficulties.

We are like a man who enters a lecture hall and starts questioning as to why tea and snacks are not available because of one particular thinking, which is a wrong one, it was thought that the hall was meant for a reception function. If we tell him that the hall was meant for delivering lectures he will withdraw his objections and will feel sorry for that.

Therefore, we should consider this world as it is. We should know the purpose of our existence and in that case all our objections will be nullified. We must be certain of the fact that this world is not a place of our permanent abode but it is a passage of our life.

If we adhere to this conviction then all our objections such as with regard to the dying of people on account of disease, floods, and earthquake etc. will be removed because we have come over here not to live for ever but for departing from here. It is a different matter by what means we happen to depart from here, either through disease, floods or earthquakes etc.

Example: A customer entered a glassware shop where the glasses were arranged in an upside-down position. He looked at them minutely and said the mouth of the glass was closed. He picked up a glass in that condition and remarked that it had not even its bottom.

The shopkeeper laughed at this and took the glass from his hand and put it into upright position and said, "Sir, the glass has its bottom as well as the mouth".

In the same way our objections are due to our wrong thinking and defective approach of things. So to say we see all things with coloured glasses. If we put on red glasses on our eyes we will take turnips as beets.

In short, all our objections originate from wrong thinking and incorrect interpretations. First we think that the world is a place of comfort and then we start making objections when we are faced with disappointments. As a matter of fact this world is a place of development and progress. This is a place where we sow the seeds. Obviously such a process involves hard work, hardships and difficulties.

Differences Develop the Society

If we accept some principles we shall realize that our basic differences play an important role in our life. First of all8 man's life is a social life, that is, we are not like self-growing grass which perishes all by itself. We are not born all by ourselves and do not perish all by ourselves without having any relation with somebody else.

Another point is the social life cannot function without mutual cooperation and cooperation only comes in the face of differences. It is because a certain man is perfect in a certain profession or field of activity and is weak in another.

The difference of capabilities, courage and perfection necessitates the improvement of the society so that one set of people or individuals should help to fulfil the wants and deficiencies of others. It is for that reason that differences give rise to necessities which develop the society.

Difficulties Build up Personalities

The Holy Qur'an says that unpleasant events and accidents in life are the danger signs for man. A life without difficulties and hardship makes man lethargic and pleasure-loving. It is said that if the road is smooth and straight, the driver falls asleep. We have read in the Islamic narrations that Allah afflicts His noble servants with difficulties and hardships.

The Holy Prophets have been subjected to the most trying and severest types of difficulties and their devout followers with hardships of a lesser degree. We read in the tradition that Allah nurtures His servants by afflicting them with difficulties in the same manner in which a mother nurtures her child by suckling. Difficulties not only help to build up man's personality but the experience of the past difficulties also does the same.

We read in the following verses of the Holy Qur'an.

Did He not find you as an orphan and take care of you? Did He not find you perplexed and show you the way? And did He not find you in need and enrich you? So do not oppress the orphans, and do not drive the beggars away, and proclaim the bounties of your Lord. (Surah az-Zuha, 93:6)

Allah considers it good to revive the memory of past difficulties and hardships. The Holy Qur'an stresses that difficulties and hardships are meant for offering supplications and purifying the soul as is evident from the following verses.

We had sent Our guidance to the nations who lived before you and afflicted them with distress and adversity so that they might submit themselves to Allah. (Surah al-An'am, 6:42)

In every town in which We sent a Prophet, We tested its inhabitants through distress and adversity so that perhaps they would submit themselves to Us. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:94)

The traditions say that had there been no poverty, diseases and death, no power on earth could subdue man and he would have been proud of his transgression. Really, comfort and luxuries make man without having any purpose and aim of life. Imam Ali says: "The wood obtained from the trees of the forest is comparatively strong". (See: Letter 45, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1985)

Imam Hasan Askari says that in a way there is some goodness in misfortunes (Biharul Anwar, vol. 78, p. 374) in the sense that these misfortunes establish a link between Allah and us on the one hand and on the other divert our attention to doing something good.

Hardships affect our bodies with the result that our soul is strengthened. As for example the host has to undergo some sort of hardship in treating his guest with genero. sity but by this his personality is developed in attaining the quality of being generous and kind.

There is a tradition which says that hardships and adversities are warning signals to the cruel people. And for the believers they are a means of their trial and their betterment. For the pious and the saints they are a source of their attaining dignity and perfection. (Biharul Anwar, vol. LXXXI, p. 108)1ll

An Example: The following are the three ways of prompting a soldier to work:

(i) When a soldier commits any irregularity he is ordered to do a difficult job by way of punishment.

(ii) Sometimes he is reformed by giving him a strenuous training so as to improve his abilities.

(iii) Sometimes when his rank and status are to be elevated he is sent on leave or is assigned a difficult job so as to justify his promotion to the higher rank.

Hence, suffering is a trial for the believer and on this basis the bounties of Allah are not the proof of one's honour, nobility and virtue, for sometimes the best of pious and devout people are afflicted with misfortunes and adversities so that these people should derive strength to make themselves perfect, because unless sandal-wood is not burnt its scented smell will not be felt.

Undergoing such sort of ups and downs in life is the means of gaining perfection for unless metals are not put into a furnace, they are not purified. Unless the soil is turned up with a plough it cannot be worthy of cultivation. Unless the grass is chewed by the teeth of a goat it does not get converted into flesh. Unless mutton is cooked on fire it is not fit to be eaten by human beings so as to become human protoplasm.

Similarly, unless man also suffers hardships and adversities and endures them bravely he cannot attain his spiritual purity and perfection. Our existence is not for the sake of eating and relaxing, for this thing is also common among the animals. What distinguishes us from the animals is the qualities of human attributes that we possess, e.g. the remembrance of Allah by way of worship, fraternity, and the spirit of sacrifice. Obviously we cannot achieve these qualities without undergoing hardships.

Hardships Lead to Inventions

If you are not faced with any difficulty you will not be able to make something new or invent anything. If we had not happened to fall sick, the science of medicine would not have been so developed. If we had not experienced cold and hot weather we would have not been able to invent means to protect ourselves from cold and heat.

In some branches of science and technology such as medicine, military science, and industries, etc. we have become so advanced because we had to face enormous difficulties. This is such an established fact that one need not to go into details.

(vi) The sixth point is that man should not always keep an eye on the negative aspect of things only. There is a wise saying that if you lay hand on a lemon do not throw it away because it is sour but instead prepare a lemonade out of it. It is wise to see the positive aspect also and benefit from it.

Prophet Yusuf was thrown into a well by his brothers. Thereafter, he was rescued by some people of a passing caravan and was sold by them as a slave. He was accused of an ugly charge in Egypt and was sent to the prison. After all after these calamitous happenings he became the king of Egypt.

After a long time when he met his father, the latter asked him what treatment was meted out to him by his brothers? Prophet Yusuf replied to his father: "Do not ask me of the treatment of my brothers but only ask me of the Kindness and Benevolence that Allah had showered on me, how He took me out of the difficulties, that is conspiracies, serfdom, slander and the prison cell, and how He freed me from the baseless charge that had been levelled against me".

This is one way of thinking that man does not always think on the negative aspect of things, but he looks into the positive aspect of the things too.

We do not forget the tradition which has come to us from Imam Hasan Askari. He said: "There is no misfortune which does not have with it some goodness which overpowers it. (Biharul Anwar, vol. LXXVIII, p 374)

However the objections of some people against the Justice of Allah are based on the fact that they always look into the problem from one aspect only.

Here I quote an example narrated by a scholar: "The sun shines on the ocean and raises the water vapours, which are converted into clouds, laden with rain drops. The earth's gravitational force attracts these rain drops downward.

These rain drops together flood the small drains which turn into rivers. Man builds dam on these rivers and generates electricity which helps the irrigation of agricultural lands. Now? if anyone out of sheer laziness or stupidity touches the live-wire and is electrocuted or if while ploughing the fields an ant-hill is destroyed, will somebody allow that man or the ants to blame Benjamin Franklin who discovered electricity and put it to useful purposes.

Will the ants be justified in cursing the sun, the clouds, the rains, the man and the cultivation of lands because its home was destroyed in the process. Is it not that these objections are based on selfishness?

Do such objections not indicate that we look into a problem from one aspect only and are motivated by selfish desires only as if the whole Universe should work for our own personal interest and that too for the temporary gain? Sometimes the difficulties that we face today turn to our

benefit tomorrow, but we do not feel satisfied unless they give us fruitful result only today".

Another Explanation: In regard to Allah's Justice about unpleasant happenings is that we should accept one of the two concepts regarding the Universe. That is, we should either accept the well-balanced system of the working of the Universe or we should treat that system as defective. If in the Universe things are working on a set pattern and system, then there must be some unpleasant incidents also, or else one should try to find out any irregularities in it.

To understand this if we think over some unpleasant happening we shall come to know that they are governed by such fixed rules and harmonies that to accept them will amount to accepting those unpleasant happenings too. Take an example of a house which collapses over the heads of its inmates. Let us try to find out the reasons of such a mishap in the following manner:

(a) The ball with which the children were playing in the street falls down on the roof of a house.

(b) The ball after rolling down on the roof of the house reaches the mouth of a drain and blocks the flow of rain water.

(c) When it rained, the rain water did not pass through the mouth of the drain and instead got accumulated on the roof and the inmates of the house remained quite unaware of this.

(d) The rain water was soaked through the roof and the bricks also became wet and weak.

(e) The roof of bricks which had become heavy with water gave way and collapsed. Some of the inmates of the house died because of the falling down of the roof.

The ball, its rolling, the slope of the roof, the narrowness of the hole on the roof, the weight of the accumulated water, the weakening of the bricks, the heaviness of the roof, the distance above the heads of the inmates who were sleeping under the roof, their bone structure and such other things are regulated by a fixed system.

If one accepts the general principle of a fixed system one will have to accept the happenings of the mishap as a result of falling down of the roof over the inmates of the house. But if one wished that such an unpleasant accident should have not occurred, then it will amount to accepting a disruption and irregularity in the set system; as for example:

(a) The ball should have been so heavy as to not fall on the roof, or

(b) the arms of the children should have not been strong enough to handle the ball, or

(c) the mouth of the hole on the roof had been so wide as to let the ball pass through it, or

(d) the rains should have not occurred, or

(e) the water should have lost its property of getting absorbed into the bricks, or

(f) the bricks would have been hard enough in not absorbing the water inside them, or

(g) the gravitational force of earth would have ceased to function on that particular night so as to avoid the falling down of the roof over the inmates of the house, or

(h) the bones of the inmates of the house should have been as hard as steel, so that the falling down of the roof would have not crushed them, or

(i) the heavy roof should have been as light as feather, so that by falling down over the inmates it would not have hurt them. From this it is proved that if we accept a definite system of cause and effect and order of working, we shall have to accept the happenings of accidents and mishaps as a natural consequence, and to defy the happenings of such mishaps would amount to breaking the natural laws and physical phenomena which have been established by Divine Wisdom.

In short, if this Universe has certain set principles and rules it envisages mishaps and accidents also. If it is decided that there should occur no mishaps or accidents, then there would be no definite principles and set rules of working of everything. One should remember that if there are irregularities and disorders the chaos thus caused would lead to manifold evils and mishaps.

Great Caution: In our discussion about the Justice of Allah and the variation found in the human faculties, we should also give attention to the fact that some people who consider themselves lacking in one or the other faculties may be having capabilities in other spheres of activities.

There are people who for the sake of personal benefit or greed or enmity adopt a certain profession or vocation in which they do not succeed, and bring frustration, they blame the Universe and consequently are embittered by failures and anxieties. On the other hand other people despise them and consider them as useless though such people show exemplary success in other departments.

It is said that the father of Charles Darwin was a physician and he wanted his son to adopt the same profession but Darwin could not make any progress in that field. His father got very much dejected and he forced him to acquire religious learning so that he could have become a good priest but he proved a failure there too.

After failing in these two different fields, he chose natural sciences and became the pioneer in propounding a theory known as 'The Theory of Evolution".

We read in the tradition that if a man faces failure in a certain field or profession he should change it; possibly in the other field he may attain distinction.

There is some hidden defect in every perfection, and in every defect there is a hidden perfection.

Imam Ali says: "Often physical characteristics and features do not respond to mental capacities. Many a time it is seen that very handsome persons are slow-witted and dull. Many tall and well-built persons are found to be cowards and un-aspiring while one often comes across very ugly and sinister-looking people who are good tempered, honest and pious.

Similarly, short and stumpy men may be very intelligent and foresighted. It is often found that men of good character have accidentally addicted themselves to bad habits". (See: Sermon 238, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1985)

Therefore, every successful man is not successful in all the fields, nor he who is unsuccessful in one sphere of activity is necessarily unsuccessful in all his activities.

There are some people who join a particular field of activity on account of sheer jealousy, despite the fact that they have no aptitude or interest in it, but when they prove to be a failure they blame the Justice of Allah by saying: "O Allah! Why such and such man was successful and I met with failure?"

If such a man had adopted a profession in which he had some interest and which was in keeping with his inborn faculties he would have met with sure success. Thus it can be said that a man can be unsuccessful if he had been unable to recognize his own talents and mental disposition in a certain field of activity which he chooses for himself and if we give a careful thought to the success achieved by a person we can discover certain weaknesses, failures, and defects along with that success.

There are other questions which come to our mind in regard to our discussions on the Justice of Allah.

The First Question: Is the creation of Satan in line with the Wisdom and Justice of Allah? Was the creation of man not for the purpose of worshipping Allah, and accordingly was the creation of Satan the negation of this purpose? Apart from that man performs a certain deed after undergoing great efforts but errors and false notions on his part nullify such a deed in three different ways.

Firstly, such a deed loses its real image as envisaged by Divine Will from the very beginning because of its showy character. Secondly, in the course of performing such a deed an element of pride defeats the very purpose of its accomplishment; and thirdly, because of the sins committed after its accomplishment the very deed is brought to naught. Can in such a case the creation of Satan be in consonance with the Wisdom and Justice of Allah?

Answer to the Question: The existence and the qualities that Allah gave to Satan were all good, and for a long long time he had been worshipping Allah. Satan's wickedness lay in his disobedience to the command of Allah and even worse than that his disobedience became his sin as he did not feel sorry for his misbehaviour and did not repent of his sin.

Not only that he became arrogant and moreover he objected to the command of Allah by saying that His command was unjust because he was made of fire and Adam was made of earth, and hence he was superior to Adam. Accordingly Satan's flouting the Divine command was due to his arrogance.

In the case of man, however, his unfounded fears are not such that he may become forced to commit sins. The strength of these unfounded notions leads to inclinations only. That is all. It does not kill our intention. And also there is a useful aspect of these fears, because our training and firmness of character lies in our fighting against our wicked desires and devilish notions.

If a dumb man does not commit backbiting, it does not give him any credit. We give a man title of a strong man because he lifts a heavy weight from the ground against the greater force of earth's gravity. Indeed the sign of strength lies in opposing or counteracting the gravitational force.

The Holy Prophet said, "If anger draws a man towards doing an evil thing and he controls himself, he actually is as strong as a wrestler".

Apart from that if a man-falls a prey to the evil thoughts there is a door of repentance open to him up to the last hour and he can repent of his sins. On the other hand if we had been left alone with Satanic thoughts, it would have been a difficult thing, but as against the evil temptations induced by Satan we are blessed with wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Prophets which lead us to tread the straight path.

But for distracting us from this path we are followed by Satanic temptations. It is not that Satan draws us towards him but the fact is that we too attract him towards us. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'an narrates the following incident of a depraved scholar:

Muhammad, relate to them the plight of the person whom We inspired with Our guidance, but he passed them by, so that Satan came after him and he went astray. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:175)

From this verse it is established that Satan reaches the people who by their own deed show their inclinations towards Satan. The man referred to in this verse was Bal'am a scholar, who belonged to the tribe of Bani Isra'il.

Allah had endowed him with some kinds of knowledge by virtue of which his supplications used to be granted by Allah, but he established his contacts with the court of Fir'aun and thus for the sake of attaining worldly gain and power he was detached from knowledge and the signs of Allah and fell into the trap of Satan.

We learn from the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

Satan has certainly no control over the Believers who have trust in their Lord. The only authority he has is over his followers and those who consider things equal to Allah.(Surah an-Nahl, 16:99-100)

The fact that Satan has no power over the believers does not mean that he does not tempt them into wrong ways, but the fact is that those, who know the Satan quite well, are the true believers. They do not fall a prey to his temptations but resist them with full force and they are never influenced by him in any way. The Holy Qur'an describes the believers' resistance against the Satan in the following verses:

Those who are pious remember Allah when assailed by the instigations of Satan, and certainly they begin to understand, even though their (devilish) brothers would like them to continue in error and would not desist. (Surah al-A'raf, 7: 201-202)

Therefore, the believers are the antagonists of Satan and the transgressors are his friends and patrons. The Holy Qur'an says:

We shall make Satan the companion of whoever ignores the remembrance of the Beneficent Allah. (Surah az-Zukhruf, 43:36)

In short, Satan is such a creation of Allah that he could make the best use of his abilities but owing to his pride and obduracy he ruined himself for

nothing. His ruination concerns him alone. The Satanic thoughts cannot, therefore, compel us to transgress and abandon the right path.

Thus for those, who fall under his trap, the door of repentance is open and the Satanic influences only come through our own doing. From all that has been stated now it cannot be said that the creation of Satan was against the Justice of Allah.

The Second Question: Another thing which is often asked in respect of the Justice of Allah is the problem of those unfortunate individuals who pass their lives under agony and hardship, and are subjected to humiliation by the people. They ask as to why such individuals have been created at all?

The answer to the second question can be found from the foregoing discussions as we have already stated before that the very cause of our unpleasant happenings is our own doing. The less fortunate people are also the product of our indifferent and lethargic attitude. It is the parents who should abide by the hygienic and psychological principles.

It is by their ignoring them that abnormal and retarded children are born. Fortunately, instructions on these principles have been laid down in the narrations of our infallible Imams. Cohabitation in the state of intoxication, menstruation, or food poisoning can have an adverse effect on the fetus.

It is necessary that for the purpose of enlightening the young men and women in the family planning centers, sex education, in line with Islamic teachings, be imparted so as to produce healthy children, and bring them up properly according to Islamic standard.

What is the Fault of a New-born Child?

The question arises: "What is the fault of the new-born child?" Our answer is: "What is the fault of Allah?" Here both, the new-born child and the Beneficent Allah are faultless. Those who are at fault are the parents, but the new-born child is the sufferer.

This is not so only in the case of a new-born child, but in all cases of oppressions and cruelties the fault is of the oppressors and the oppressed have to suffer.

If I throw a stone at you and you are wounded, then neither you nor Allah are at fault, but the fault is only mine and you suffer. Similarly when the question is raised as to why the offspring should suffer on account of the faults of the parents, the same question can be raised in case of the oppressors, who have committed oppression but the oppressed suffer.

If you brought a saltish or bitter yeast to a baker to make the bread for you, would you blame the baker who gave you the saltish or bitter bread?

If you sowed the seed of a watermelon and you got a watermelon will anybody raise an objection to it?

Would you expect to reach your destination in the north if you happen to travel southward?

Every food and every disposition has its natural effect and to save oneself from those effects one will have to defeat all the natural laws (which is impossible). To expect something else from the seed of a fruit or from the sperm is contrary to reason.

Again the question that the parents' fault was a temporary error but the damage done to a deformed baby was a permanent one has no concern with

Allah. You cap blind yourself in a moment with a knife and you remain blind for the lifetime. The fault was for a fraction of a moment but you suffered the agony for the whole life.

You smash a glass in a moment but the glass is broken forever. Similar are the psychological problems. If you abuse a man, he severs his connections with you for the whole of his life, and an apology made for a moment annul the lifelong rancor and enmity.

I had cited an example of a man who was very careful about his health but when he took a spoon of poison he nullified all his efforts of maintaining his good health.

Here arises another point to consider that the parents did not know that their action according to the Divine laws would have an adverse effect on the new-born baby. The answer to this is that the parents' awareness or unawareness does not affect the natural consequences.

It is immaterial whether or not we know that a certain wire is a live-wire and if we touch it we are sure to be electrocuted. Electricity would not stop its function if we are unaware of its existence, and would not leave us alive.

If by mistake we drink wine taking it to be water, we shall certainly be intoxicated because it is the effect of the wine to make one intoxicated. Hence the innocence of the parents is in the sense that they did not commit a mistake intentionally, but after all the natural effect of a certain action must follow its own course.

The second question that arises is with regard to humiliation of the physically-handicapped persons who are born as such. The matter of their humiliation by the people is not connected with Allah or anybody else but it is a matter of their own way of thinking.

We should not look down upon the people born with congenital physical defects. The sacred teachings of Islam have given many instructions in this regard.

In fact, it is the responsibility of the Government in power that it should take care of them with due respect and solemnity and provides them suitable work according to their individual capacity and ability so as to provide reasonable means for their livelihood and also ensure that their efforts are rightly rewarded by giving them maximum return. We wish to conclude this topic but not without making a request to our readers.

A Request: We should not entertain any doubt about the fundamentals of our beliefs and ideology. Whenever a problem regarding faith and ideology crops up and we cannot answer it we should better refer the matter to a religious scholar. We should note down the telephone numbers of a few religious scholars so that we may seek their guidance on even small objections.

Just as sometimes a small nail pierces our foot and makes us unable to walk, a small objection disturbs our mind and makes us skeptical about our faith and makes our life miserable although apparently it looks like a very trifle thing. Our youngsters who are often confronted with some such objections and criticisms raised by some vested interest should in particular be in touch with a well-informed, virtuous and pious scholar so that he may give them proper advice and guidance.

A Reminiscence: Once I happened to come across a few friends of mine who told me that the Islamic laws do not fall in line with the true spirit of culture and civilization because according to Islamic jurisprudence the four fingers of a thief are to be chopped off while communism says that if we change our financial system and satisfy everybody's wants, there would be no possibility of thefts.

When I inquired of them how they have formed such an opinion they told me that one of their teachers who were a supporter of socialism had told them such a theory which appealed to them and which they took to their heart.

However, I replied to them that Islam does not allow chopping off the hands of every thief; on the contrary in Islam there are twenty conditions before a thief's hand can be chopped off. I asked them who amongst them knew those conditions.

All of them said that they did not know those twenty conditions. I told them that had they acquired some knowledge about Islamic laws they would have questioned their teacher in the classroom and told him that if he did not know the true facts about that matter he should have not poked his nose without having acquired proper knowledge about it.

I told my friends that they should have invited their teacher to, a frank discussion on the point or they should have consulted an Islamic scholar. After I told them a few of those conditions they started pondering over it and then we parted company.

I invite the attention of my esteemed readers on the statement that the Holy Qur'an claims that in the long run Islam would be triumphant against evil forces and the people of the entire world would ultimately embrace Islam, and Imam Mahdi, the Imam of the Age will rule over the whole world. But there are some certain conditions with this claim as follows:

(i) People's attention towards Islam.

(ii) Identification of Islam.

(iii) Mental preparedness to understand Islam.

Indeed, the martyrs of the Islamic Revolution in Iran have turned the attention of the people towards Islam and in that way they have initiated a major step towards that direction. It is our duty now that we move forward to acquaint the people with the true spirit of Islam and then it is the duty of the other people who have been disappointed with different faiths and ideologies and are inclined towards Islam.

Therefore, it is necessary that we read at least one good book every week so that we keep ourselves abreast with the Islamic learning.

Imam Ali Riza said: "If people become familiar with Islamic guidance they would be easily inclined towards it".

In the study of books priority should be given to those books which deal with faith and general outlook on the Universe, because our deeds are based on our thinking, and therefore considering other schools of thought we should choose for ourselves a proper line based on solid arguments.

In concluding our discussions on the Justice of Allah we should like to invite the attention of the reader to the following important points:

Categorization-The Means of Recognizing Allah

Just as undue preference is cruelty, in the same way rational categorization is real justice besides being a source of recognition of Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

Among other signs of His existence is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the differences of languages and complexions. (Surah ar-Rum, 30:22)

Thus if a draftsman makes the same type of lay-outs and blueprints, an architect the same type of buildings, and the poet writes the verses of the same style, it will show his weakness and lack of knowledge, but if all these people show some originality in style and crafts it will speak of their creative faculty.

Social Justice

After we have dealt with the Justice of Allah we now switch over to social justice. Since the subject of social justice has a wider range we confine ourselves to quoting relevant matters from the Holy Qur'an, the traditions, and Nahjul Balaghah, and have at the same time given explanation of every verse and tradition because these will help project our view-point on relevant matters and their knowledge will be beneficial to the people in general.

The purpose of our discussion on social justice is to mention those verses of the Holy Qur'an and the traditions through which the Holy Qur'an and our infallible Imams have given lessons of equality of mankind in the eyes of the law and of preservation of their rights.

They have also forbidden undue discrimination, cruelties and exploitation. Apart from this we have cited the examples of just distribution of wealth, Islamic brotherhood and fraternity set by the Holy Prophet of Islam and his Holy Ahlul Bayt (peace be on them).

Justice in All Islamic Laws

Islam is an institution of justice and moderation. It is a straight path and the Muslim fraternity is the nation which practices moderation and justice. The Islamic system is based on justice. If there are tears for the oppressed then there are swords for the oppressors.

If it gives importance to preservation of physical health, it also stresses on our spiritual enlightenment and moral uplift. If it ordains the offering of prayers, it also orders paying zakat (religious tax).

If it asks us to love and respect the pious people, it also insists on hatred against the enemies of Allah. If it lays stress on acquiring knowledge it also considers the performance of noble deeds as compulsory. If it commands us to have faith and trust in Allah, it also advises us

to make efforts to achieve our objects. If it allows acquisition of personal wealth and property, it also forbids taking undue advantage of ownership and damaging the interest of other people. If it recommends excluding an offender it also insists on enforcement of punitive laws and making no remissions in punishments.

When Imam Ali was told by the people about the piety and devotion of a person offering his prayers, he asked about the intention and the character of a person.

Hence it means that if a person is a devout worshipper of Allah, we should judge him by his views and behavior.

Social Justice and Divine Outlook on the Universe

In a society unless the high sounding slogans take strength from their roots they do not go ahead of slogan mongering. The slogan of social justice is raised by every government but you will not find even a slight tinge of social justice there. The reason is that such slogans are not based on sincerity.

In Islam equality and freedom have a solid base, for example,

(i) The entire universe is under the care of the All Wise Allah and there is no irregularity in it. Being a part of this world, I cannot do what I like and that too with selfish motives.

(ii) Our ways of doing things and deeds and even our mode of thinking are under surveillance of our Lord, who knows everything about us without our awareness. After all we shall have to present ourselves before Him for the accountability of our deeds.

(iii) All of us have been raised from dust and we shall be reduced to dust. There s no difference among the particles of dust; hence why should there be any difference between somebody else and me?

(iv) Everybody is the servant of Allah and to treat everyone with love and affection becomes the source of Allah's pleasure and the best man is he who is the best well-wisher of others.

(v) Allah's creatures cannot exceed the limits and the unlawful rights which the Creator has set for them.

(vi) We are all the offspring of the same parents.

This description and outlook on the world and man is the most potent basis of accepting the principles of justice and equity, but corrupt environment and avarice pull down its foundation.

Seeking Justice is a Natural Thing

Allah has endowed man with the knowledge of right and wrong things and their resultant results. The Holy Qur'an says:

And We inspired the soul with knowledge of evil and piety. Those who purify their souls will certainly have ever lasting happiness and those who corrupt their soul will certainly be deprived of happiness. (Surah ash-Shams, 91:8-10)

Take an example of a child who kept his apple with you. After a while he comes back and he finds that you have eaten a small portion of it. He becomes displeased and looks at you with an accusing eye as if he is saying that you are guilty of a breach of trust.

This is certain that even a child knows about injustice even though he may not tell you so with his tongue. Therefore, misappropriation is an evil which is teacher need not teach a child. It is but natural that man considers misappropriation as a bad thing.

Similarly justice is a thing which man considers by himself considers it a good thing and its proof is that the oppressor himself justifies his action by saying that he has not been unjust!

Sometimes several people commit theft jointly but when the question of distribution of the booty comes they talk of making a just and equitable distribution.

Such a thing does happen and the fact that consciously or subconsciously they mean equitable distribution. And if anyone of the group wants to take the lion's share, the other partners become annoyed.

It has been a general rule that whenever a person is killed while safeguarding his rights and upholding the cause of social justice or takes a firm stand against the tyrants he is praised by the people in general. It is in human nature that man supports the cause of injustice and wages war against injustice.

Just Laws Originate From Holy Prophet's Conduct

There is hardly any society which does not talk of truthfulness, justice and rational laws. Nor there is any regime which does not claim to uphold the people's rights and welfare. In this connection we deal with the following pertinent questions:

(i) Is there any law which can claim to be hundred per cent just, so that nobody is deprived of his rights?

(ii) Is there any law maker who has never been impartial and who has not been influenced by personal prejudices?

(iii) On what standard can a certain law be determined as just?

(iv) What stratum do the law makers come from and for which group of society do they want to protect the rights?

(v) If the law-makers are free from any political, tribal, zonal or racial bias, then on what standard will they enact just and fair laws for all the people and for all the time to come?

From the above-mentioned questions we arrive at the conclusion that social justice and just laws are only possible through Divine Laws conveyed to the mankind by the Prophets of Allah.

Justice is the Basic Condition

In Islam all important establishments and installations remain under the control of just people, whose reputation has been good and who are able and pious. In the matter of administration of justice, right from the qazi (magistrate) to the ordinary clerk and the witnesses, all should be particular in upholding justice.

In all congregational prayers including Friday prayers the man who leads the prayers must be just and honest. It is necessary that the mujtahid (jurist) whom we follow, the President, the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister and the man pronouncing the formula of divorce are all just and honest.

In the matter of giving news only the just and honest men should he relied upon. In short Islam has laid great emphasis on justice and it is the basis on which all problems of the society, be it personal, social or economical are decided.

The Importance of Justice in Traditions

The Holy Prophet of Islam said: "A moment of justice is better than seventy years of worship in which you keep fasts and pass the nights in offering prayers and worship to Allah". (Jami'us Sa'adat, vol. II, p. 223)

The Holy Prophet further said: "The deed of justice performed by a leader for one day for his people is better than the deeds of the man who spends fifty or hundred years amongst his family members in the worship of Allah".

Imam Ja'far Sadiq said: "The supplication of a just leader is never refused". (Nizamul Islam as-Siyasi, p. 71)

Imam Ali said: "Justice is the essence of the people's welfare as well as the adherence to the Divine path".

He further said: "Justice is life and cruelty is the death of society". (Qisarul Jumal).

Hence, those who submit themselves before oppression are in fact as good as dead bodies.

Importance of Justice

Imam Musa Kazim in the commentary of the verse: He sends down water from the sky and enlivens the earth that was dead ....(Surah ar-Rum, 30:24) says: "The earth comes back to life by administering justice and enforcing divine laws of punishment". (Qisarul Jumal)

Establishment of Justice is the Object of the Prophets

One of the duties and responsibilities of the Prophets of Allah that the Holy Qur'an has mentioned is the instituting of social justice. We, therefore, give below a short list of the achievements and accomplishments of the Holy Prophets:

(i) Inviting the People Towards Allah Inviting the people to worship Allah and preventing them from obeying the despots and tyrants and to remain aloof from them. The Holy Qur'an says:

To every nation We sent a Messenger (saying): 'Worship Allah and shun the Devil'. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:36)

(ii) Giving Warnings and Bearing Good News The Holy Qur'an says:

We have sent you (Muhammad) for a genuine purpose to proclaim glad tidings and warnings. You will not be blamed for the dwellers of blazing Hell. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:119)

(iii) Teaching and Imparting Instructions The Almighty Allah sent the Prophets towards the people so that they might give them training and tell them those things which they needed. The Holy Qur'an says:

It is He who has sent to the illiterates a Messenger from among their own people who recites to them His revelations, and purifies them. He will teach the Book to them and others who have not yet joined, and He will give them wisdom. Before this they had been in plain error.(Surah al-Jumu'ah, 62:2)

(iv) Opposing Oppressive Laws To eradicate all sorts of social taboos and customs as well as tribal prejudices and savagery based on superstitious ideas. The Holy Qur'an says:

He (the Messenger)enjoins them to do good and forbids them to do all that is unlawful, makes lawful for them all that is pure and unlawful that is filthy, removes their burdens and entanglements in which they are involved.(Surah al-A'raf, 7:157)

(v) Exposing the Futility of False and Evil Things To expose the wrong ways of the false gods and despotic rulers and disgrace them. The Holy Qur'an says:

Thus, do We explain our revelations so that the sinful ways can be plainly discerned. (Surah al-An'am, 6:55)

(vi) Establishing a Society Based on Justice The Prophets founded a society in which the people should establish justice and treat others without any consideration of caste, creed, political or economic differences.

The Prophets' main function was to inculcate in the people's heart a firm belief in Allah and the Day of Judgement and to create in the individual and the society such moral standard and Divine thinking as would arouse in

them the spirit of justice and equity towards their fellow beings. The Holy Qur'an says:

We sent Our Messengers with clear evidence (to support their truthfulness), and sent with them the Book and the Balance (criteria of right and wrong) so that people would maintain justice. We sent down iron, in which is a vital war material and which benefits the people, so that Allah would know who would help Him though unseen, and His Messengers. (Surah al-Hadid, 57:25)

Since a just society depends on spiritual as well as material power, the above-mentioned verse points out to both the powers that is the Book and the Balance. And each one of them is necessary for establishing justice.

The mentioning of iron in the verse points to material strength so that the transgressor may note that if they violate justice they will be crushed with an iron hand. Thus, one of the main duties of the Holy Prophets was to establish social justice.

Imam Ali's Argument on Equity

When the people objected to Imam Ali's equitable distribution of wealth he replied:

(i) If the wealth had belonged to me even then I would have distributed it equally among the people but this wealth belongs to Allah and is meant for distribution among the people and therefore everybody has his right in it.

(ii) To distribute wealth among those who do not deserve it amounts to squandering the wealth. The Holy Qur'an also says.

Do not squander your wealth wastefully. The squanderers are indeed Satan's brothers and Satan is ungrateful to his Lord. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:27)

(iii) The inequitable and unjust distribution of wealth results in the formation of a group of greedy persons who surround the people and extract money from them through flattery and undue praise and thus makes them ashamed in the eyes of the law of Divine Justice.

Furthermore, Imam Ali says: "Unjustifiable and undeserving donations may enhance the status of a man among his worldly surroundings but he is sadly humiliated in the eyes of Allah. One who spends his wealth in evil ways and on wrong persons, is deprived, by the Lord, of the gratitude of those over whom he had spent; these undeserving beneficiaries usually turn against him and at the time of distress and need he finds them as his worst enemies, censuring his actions and blaming him for his lavish grants". (Sermon 129, p. 322, Peak of Eloquence)

Confiscation of Property

As and when the days passed by after the time of the Holy Prophet, people started drifting away from Islamic social justice to the extent that Caliph Uthman lavishly gave his kith and kin wealth from the public property. It was this discrimination and favoritism that aroused the anger of the people who put him to death, and thereafter swore allegiance to Imam Ali.

When the regime of the Commander of the Faithful Imam Ali commenced, he revolutionized the entire system, eradicated all irregularities

so as to bring the affairs of the State on an even keel. As such the properties unlawfully acquired were confiscated and unjust appointments and dismissals were cancelled.

Imam Ali declared: "By Allah! If I had known of this sort of public weal h, even if it was spent in paying the dower of the women or for purchasing slave girls, I would have confiscated it too". (Vide: Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

No Distinction Between an Arab and a Non-Arab

Two women came to take their shares from Baytul Mal (Public Treasury). One of them was an Arab and the other one was a non-Arab. Imam Ali gave them equal share as usual. Those people who had not as yet comprehended the essence of Islam did not tolerate this justice and raised an objection against the Imam's action.

They complained of treating an Arab and a non-Arab on equal footing. At this the Holy Imam said: "I did not find any difference between the two". (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XI, p. 81)

Owing to his strict observance of equity and his treatment of people of various classes of society without any distinction, selfish people and transgressors became critical of the policies and the administration of justice initiated by Imam Ali but all their crooked tactics and criticisms could not deviate him from the path of monotheism and Divine Justice.

He was one of those few blessed souls who did not mind in the last such baseless criticisms. The Holy Qur'an says:

Believers, any one of you turns back on his faith (should remember) that Allah could verily bring (in your place) another people whom He would love as they would love Him, gentle with believers, unbending with infidels, who would strive in the way of Allah unafraid of blame by any slanderer. (Surah al-Ma'ida, 5:54)

Counting the Dead

In the Age of Ignorance the larger the tribe was the greater was its dignity among the people. Once a dispute on the counting of the members of a tribe became so serious that they insisted on counting their dead ones also so that they could prove the largeness of their tribe. Hence, the following verse ot the Holy Qur'an was revealed.

The avarice o f plenitude keeps you occupied till you reach the grave. (Surah at-Takathur, 102-1-2)

From this it is meant that the abundance of wealth and manpower has blinded you to the extent that you are going to count the dead ones by going to their graves and are feeling proud of it.

Imam Ali after reciting the above surah condemned that sort of attitude. (See: Sermon 225, Peak of Eloquence)

In another similar gathering where everyone was bragging of his own tribe, race and pedigree, the turn of Salman Farsi came. People thought that since he had not come from a noteworthy tribe he would feel some humiliation but Salman Farsi had received the training from the Holy Prophet of Islam.

Without undergoing any feeling of inferiority he boldly declared "You people should have no concern with my family background. What I know about myself is that I was far away from the right guidance, but under the auspices of the Holy Prophet I sought guidance and this is the only praiseworthy thing for me and nothing else". (Safinatul Bihar, vol. II, p. 348).

By giving this ideological reply he quieted them and proved to them that according to Islamic ideology and in the eyes of Allah all are equal and such boastful claims have no worth.

Advice to Buy the People for Gaining Their Favor

Some well-wishers of Imam Ali approached him and suggested to him to show special favors to the leading heads of the tribe of Quraysh and other influential people by granting them higher share for unless he gave preferential treatment to them as against the slaves and the non-Arabs he would not be able to gain their support and they would rebel against him and would go towards Mu'awiya's side.

Imam Ali said: "Should I spend the wealth and property of the Public Treasury in bribing the people in return for gaining their support? The fact is that if I gain the support of someone through money he will turn against me if he is offered a higher amount from the other party.

Therefore, we should always safeguard the principle of justice and never think of attracting the people either through money or intimidation and threats. I shall never do that no matter if someone remains with me or goes against me". This was the method adopted by the Holy Imam. He was not prepared to gain the favor of the people by doing the least injustice. (Biharul Anwar, vol. XVI, p. 108)139

Example of the Feeling of Fraternity

A citizen of Balkh says: "I was present before Imam Ali Riza. The time for dinner came. The dining-cloth was spread and meals were served. The Holy Imam invited all his white and black-skinned servants and without any hesitation seated himself amongst them.

Some people suggested a separate dining-cloth for the servants. At this the Holy Imam said: "We all have One Lord. We all belong to common parents. On the Day of Judgment we all shall be treated equally for our virtues and sins. Then why should there be discrimination here?"

The day when I see that everybody in whatever condition he may be, associates with other people without any consideration of superiority will be the day of attaining our cultural revolution.

In the same way if every Muslim without considering himself superior to others, mingles with common people rekindles in himself the spirit of Islamic instructions, then whoever associates with us will ultimately join us and become our co-religionist. (al-Kafi, vol. VIII, p. 230).

Brotherhood in Islam

It is for centuries that the black people have been undergoing hardships and oppressions. Their bath-rooms, coffeehouses, hospitals, schools and cemeteries are all separate.

Islam has very strongly censured this sort of discrimination among various classes of people. The Holy Qur'an says:

Men, We have created you all male and female and have made you nations and tribes so that you would recognize each other. The most honorable among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you. (Surah al-Hujurat, 49:13)

Among the signs of His existence is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the differences o f languages and complexions. (Surah ar-Rum, 30:22)

The Holy Prophet on the occasion of his farewell pilgrimage (hujjatul wida) said to a large gathering: "You Muslims are equal to one another no matter if you belong to one or the other tribe, race or language". (Safinatul Bihar, vol. II, p. 348)

The Holy Prophet used to award positions of dignity to the slaves and solemnized intermarriages between the white skinned and the back-skinned couples so much so that he wedded his first cousin, Zaynab, the daughter of his father's sister to a black-skinned slave so that the evil of superiority amongst the believers might be nipped in the bud.

False Criticism: The Almighty Allah has rejected the superiority of the Quraysh who considered themselves superior to all others. The Holy Qur'an says:

Then move onward from the place (Arafat) when all the People go. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:199)

The above verse was revealed when on the occasion of theHajj, the people of Quraysh considered themselves superior to others by being the custodian of the Holy Ka'ba and for this reason, while performing the rites of the Hajj, they did not go to 'Arafat and instead went to Muzdalifa.

They said that since they belonged to the Holy House of Allah (Ka'ba) they would not go to another place. Then they were asked to give up their feeling of superiority, and that they should go to the same place where others were going.

There is a Difference Between Adopting a Principle and Trading

The influential people looked down upon the followers of Prophet Nuh and insulted them. They made a proposal to him that if he abandoned associating with poor people they would keep his company. But since Prophet Nuh always upheld the cause of the poor and the downtrodden people he turned down their proposal. According to the Holy Qur'an, he said to them:

No one except Allah has to give me my reward. I do not drive away those who have faith (in my teachings), they will all receive mercy from their Lord. (Surah Hud, 11:29)

The matter which is of paramount importance to us is to uphold social justice and protect our ideology. We should only invite people to this concept and not that we should ignore one aspect of it and give up justice and equity so as to build up the strength of our supporters. This sort of

thinking is like business and blind-following and does not mean protection of ideology and worship of Allah.

Even a Single Loaf is Equally Distributed

"Some commodities were brought before Imam Ali and people came to take their share. In order that people should maintain discipline he kept the people at a distance by means of ropes and himself distributed the whole of it to the representatives of the various tribes. Afterwards, he found one loaf that was left in a container. He then ordered it to be divided into seven equal parts and like the other property gave one piece to each of the tribes". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XLI, p. 136)

Do Not Compromise on Principle

A theft occurred in the house of a Muslim in Madina. Two persons were charged with theft. One was a Muslim and the other a Jew. Both of them were brought before the Holy Prophet. The Muslims became worried that if the Muslim was proved guilty of the charge they will be humiliated before the neighboring Jews.

Thus the people came to the Holy Prophet that the honor of the Muslims was at stake and hence it was desirable that the Muslim might be acquitted of the charge. But the Holy Prophet considered an unjust decision a disgrace for Islam. The people further argued that since the Jews had perpetrated cruelties on them, it was of no significance if one of their men was unjustly punished for the crime.

The Holy Prophet said: "Justice and honest decision have nothing to do with past sufferings". At last the Holy Prophet examined the case impartially and against the wishes of the Muslims set the Jew free. This example of justice humiliated the Muslims of that time but in reality it immortalized the justice and high ideals of Islam. We should therefore, adhere to our principles and should not make innovations in them for the sake of pleasing others.

An Unjust Hope

A group of people passing by the assembly of the Holy Prophet saw with him some indigent persons like Ammar and Bilal. They said to the Holy Prophet: "Have you contented yourself on such unknown persons? If you only get rid of them we will soon join you and keep your company".

The author of Tafsirul Manarafter narrating this event says that caliph Umar showed his inclination towards the proposal of the proud people of Quraysh and said to the Holy Prophet: "You may remove these poor people from you for a few days just to test these proud people and to know if there is any sincerity in their suggestions. Then the following verse was revealed warning the Holy Prophet".

Do not turn away those who implore their Lord morning and evening, seeking His countenance. (Surah al-An'am, 6:52)

At the end of this verse, the Almighty Allah further says:

"If you drive them away you will only be unjust"

Do Not Underestimate the Judicial Decision

Two young boys wrote two different writings and came to Imam Hasan for a decision. An ordinary man will take such a simple problem very lightly, because firstly the point at issue is the piece of writing and secondly the dispute is between two boys but in any case the matter had to be decided.

Therefore, Imam Ali advised his son Imam Hasan to pay attention to the decision as whatever decision you make you will be answerable before the Divine Justice on the Day of Judgment. (Majma'ul Bayan, vol. III, p. 64)

When the Guest is Removed

A man happened to be the guest of Imam Ali. After a time he put before the Holy Imam the ease of his dispute with another person. The Holy Imam told the man, "Up till now you were my guest, but since you have become a party in a dispute with another man you should leave this place, because the Holy Prophet advised me not to make any one of the disputants as your guest unless the other one is also with you because hospitality is one thing and making a just and impartial decision is another thing. Hospitality is based on sympathy and decision of a case is based on Divine law. "

Therefore, in principle one should not involve himself in sentimental and psychological matters so that there may not be the least doubt that he would be influenced by them in the administration of justice. (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XVIII, p. 158)

Imam Ali used to instruct the tax-collector thus: "In whatever zone you go, you should arrange your stay near the bank of a river but do not stay with anyone in any event because your becoming his guest will influence your official duty to collect the tax". (See. Letter 25, Peak of Eloquence, ISP 1984)

The Holy Qur'an Condemns Partiality

As and when the Qur'anic verses were revealed people gradually got attracted to them. The Holy Prophet himself and some other followers used to preach Islam and invite the people towards Islam. Once a preaching function was held in which many famous people participated. When a preacher was addressing the people to the call of Allah and to embrace Islam a blind man appeared and started talking continuously.

This interrupted the preaching work, on account of which the speaker got much annoyed. He did not want that the blind man coming over there and if he had come at all, he should have at least kept quiet, though the speaker's friendly or unfriendly gestures of the face could not affect the blind man owing to his blindness.

Surah 'Abasa refers to this very incident and warns the speaker who had knit his brows, because possibly the blind man had a better understanding and sense of accepting the truth than other wellknown people. The Holy Qur'an says:

He frowned and turned away, because a blind man came to him. And what made you think that he will not grow in virtue. (Surah 'Abasa, 80:1-3)

Another Example of Imam Ali's Justice

'Aqil, the brother of Imam Ali, with his children came to the Imam. Their faces were pale due to starvation. He, therefore, demanded a larger share for him from the Public Treasury. It is a natural thing that a man gets affected by seeing the plight of his brother's children.

But Imam Ali rejected his brother's request and by bringing a red-hot iron near him said: "Just as you are afraid of the torment of this hot iron, similarly I am afraid of the torment of the Day of Judgment". (Sermon 221, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)148

Nobody Does That Sort of Thing

Normally the well-known people themselves go to buy their requirement from the market or send somebody else to buy for them. Such a person tells the shopkeeper that the thing is required for a man of distinction so that he may give him better quality goods at a lower price. It is just possible that bribe is given or wrong advantage of one's official position is taken in this regard.

By this a situation is created that all well to-do people take the best of stuff from the market at a cheaper rate and leave a low quality goods for the common people to buy at a higher price. It was only Imam Ali who took care to buy his requirements from a shopkeeper who did not know him or if he sent somebody else to make purchases nobody knew for whom the goods were being purchased.

Another Example of Taking Precaution

Once Imam Ali was distributing shares from the Public Treasury when his grandson happened to come and took away a thing. On such an occasion a father would normally ignore such a thing but it was Imam Ali who got perturbed and chased the child and took back the thing from him. The people told him that after all the child also had his share in it.

At this the Holy Imam replied, "No, not his, only his father's share is there and that too equal to that of any other man. It is up to him to give his son whatever share he deemed fit to give". (Hayat Imam Hasan, Baqir Sharif Qarashi, vol. I. p. 388)

Surely such a strict precaution was concerned with the Public Treasury only, but the Holy Imam was so generous in giving away his personal wealth that even Mu'awiya once said that if Ali had two rooms, one full of haystack and the other of gold it makes no difference to him to give away any of the two.

Undue Criticism Against Imam Ali

Talha and Zubayr believed in giving special treatment to the companions of the Holy Prophet. Therefore, they used to criticize Imam Ali for his dealing with the Public Treasury as well as other matters. Once they objected to the Holy Imam saying: "Why do you not consult us? '

Imam Ali after telling his promptness, ability, justice and modus operandi said: "By Allah, I never craved for rulership or caliphate for its sake only. All of you invited me to accept it and I accepted. And when I accepted it and became a ruler I started to rule according to the dictates of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah (traditions) of the Holy Prophet.

In following the commandments of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet, I never needed neither your help nor that of anybody else's. If I feel ever in need of advice, I shall most certainly consult you as well as other Muslim brethren.

So far as your complaints about equal distribution of wealth are concerned, I want to tell you that here too I am strictly following the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet. This theory of equal distribution of the wealth was revealed to the Holy Prophet by the Merciful Allah and he had taught us, you know this and so do I.

So, what Allah had commanded should be accepted by you and as well as by me. Therefore, you and your friends are not justified in blaming me for this". (Sermon 210,Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)149

Settling Dispute with Justice

"Treat the people with respect. Be kind and considerate with them. Meet them cheerfully. Be fair, just and impartial in your dealings so that even the influential persons may not dare take undue advantage of your leniency and the commoners and the poor people may not be disappointed in your justice and fair dealings". (Letter 27, Peak of Eloquence)

It is narrated that whenever the Holy Prophet talked with his companions he used to glance over to them equally in a just manner without ignoring anyone of them. (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. VIII, p 499)

In this regard Islam takes special care so much so that it emphasizes that if in a feast the host starts the washing of the hands of his guest from the right side before the meals begin the reverse process should be adopted i.e. washing should be done from the left side after the meals have been taken so that the man, who washed his hands first before the meals, should be the last one after finishing his meals. Such a great care and attention would never be found in any other code of ethics.

Using the Paper Economically

Imam Ali in one of his circulars to his officials wrote as follows: "Sharpen the tip of your pen. Do not leave much space between the lines. Avoid writing in an ornamental style and observe brevity so as to save paper. The paper belongs to the Public Treasury and the Public Treasury cannot afford any wasteful expenditure". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XLI, p. 105)

The pronouncement of Imam Ali on the importance of administering justice and of avoiding oppressive actions is very interesting. (Vide. Sermon 228, Peak of Eloquence). In this very sermon the Holy Imam further says. "I bear Allah as my witness that I prefer to pass sleepless nights over the sharp thorns of prickly plants or to suffer from the worst form of injury and insult than to meet my Lord and the Holy Prophet on the Day of Judgment as a tyrant who has persecuted any person or as a usurper who has wrongfully seized the property of somebody else.

Why should I tyrannize or exploit somebody to provide comfort and ease for my body which will shortly be destroyed and decayed and which will lie in the grave for a long period. By Allah, if all the seven continents with all that they contain are offered to me as remuneration or bribe for depriving an ant of the husk of a grain of barley carried by it, I will never do it.

This world to me is even more worthless than the small bit of a leaf chewed by a locust. Ali has no interest with mortal luxuries, wealth, ease and comforts of this world. I seek His Protection and Help from negligence of my duty and from being wicked and vicious".

Asking for a Larger Share

Once Talha and Zubayr came to Imam Ali and said: "Umar used to allocate to us a greater share than other people". The Holy Imam at once understood what they meant by saying that thing and asked: "What share did the Holy Prophet allocate to you people?"

They kept quiet. The Holy Imam then said to them: "Did the Holy Prophet of Islam, not allocate the shares to the people equally?" They replied: "Yes, he did". The Holy Imam said: "Should I follow the tradition of the Holy Prophet or should I adopt the policy of Umar?" They said, "True, you should do according to the ways of the Holy Prophet".

At this the Holy Imam said: 'Then why do you want to have more?" They replied: "We are one of the first who embraced Islam and we are closely related to the Holy Prophet. Besides, we often bore tribulations and sufferings with him". Imam Ali said: "Then I am more deserving than you taking into consideration the things you have enumerated.

I embraced Islam before you people. I am the first cousin of the Holy Prophet as well as his son-in-law. And in the battlefields it was I who unsheathed my sword more than anybody else. By Allah ! Despite all these distinct merits and besides being the head of the Islamic State, my own share is just equal to that of the laborer who is working just over there in front of us". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XLI)

Misuse of One's Position is Forbidden

Imam Ali in his capital at Kufa addressing the people said. "O people of Kufa! If ever you see some change in me and in my appearances in your town that is to say my dress, my food, my horse, and slave have changed and I have ensured for myself a prosperous and easy life during the period of my caliphate, then you should know that I have misappropriated your rights taking undue advantage of my position". During the time the Holy Imam gave bread and meat to others, he himself ate plain bread without meat". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XLI, p. 137)

An Example of Equality in Islam

The Holy Prophet used to associate with the people in so simple a dress that whenever a stranger happened to go to the Masjid, he was unable to recognize the Holy Prophet. He would glance over the faces of the people for a long time and then ask as to whom amongst them the Holy Prophet of Allah was.

The Holy Prophet used to sit among his companions in a circle in such a way that there was no distinguishable position for anyone. Of course that kind of simplicity, modesty and frankness are the traits of the Prophets of Allah.

No Nepotism

A woman belonging to the famous tribe of Makhzum committed theft. The Holy Prophet intended to punish her in accordance with the Divine law. The relatives of the woman felt disgraced for themselves for letting the woman be punished for the crime.

They then tried to influence the Holy Prophet so that the sentence for theft might not be passed. They selected Usama, who was a close companion of the Holy Prophet to recommend her case so that the punishment might be condoned by the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet became displeased and said to Usama: "Do you want yourself to be responsible for not upholding the sanctity of the Divine law?

The cause of misfortune and ruination of the followers of earlier Prophets was that when the aristocrats committed sins the Divine law was not enforced upon them but it was only done in the case of common people! By Allah! Even if my own daughter Fatima commits any theft, l shall chop off her hand also". (Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim quoted by Ruhuddin al-Islami)

Corporal Punishment

Islam besides ordaining the wearing of civilized dress and enjoining people to do good and restraining them from evil so as to make the Islamic society virtuous has also recommended corporal punishment for the sinners.

Though corporal punishment is the source of personal disgrace yet if certain people openly flout the Divine commandments and set a bad example for others, they should certainly be whipped before the general public. Besides that awarding punishment in accordance with the Divine laws is in itself worship, if personal vengeance is not involved in it.

We read in a narration that once a woman was found guilty of a major sin and she was brought before Imam Ali. The Holy Imam after making proper investigations decreed that the woman should be punished in accordance with Divine commandments.

Qambar who was one of the devoted followers of the Holy Imam was ordered to enforce the sentence of punishment but out of anger he whipped her with three extra lashes.

When the Holy Imam came to know of it, he took the lash from Qambar's hand and by making him lie down whipped him three times. Indeed, it is that framework of Islamic justice in which the punisher, who was so close with the Holy Imam for so long a period, could not be spared for doing excesses.

Suggestion Made to Imam Ali

At long last, however, the reign of the Islamic State came into the hands of Imam Ali, its rightful owner. When he assumed the reins of the government, certain Muslims who had not been imbued with the true spirit of Islam and who thought like professional politicians and the so called experts in the field of statesmanship, approached the Holy Imam and advised him thus: "It is just the beginning of your rule.

Hence, it is very necessary to consolidate your government. It is advisable that you should grant money from the Public Treasury to the rich and affluent persons, tribal heads and your favorites so that they may be

prevented from indulging in subversive activities and they may also be rightly rewarded for their non-interference".

In reply to these time-servers and soulless politicians, Imam Ali said: "Do you expect me to strengthen the foundation of my just government through oppression and injustice? Can anybody attain the goal of monotheism with his polytheistic policy?

I accepted the responsibility of running the affairs of the State for eradicating such injustices and illegal collection of taxes and now you expect me to be involved in those evil activities which I should, being duty bound, root out from the society ". (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XI, p. 80) 154

Equity in Distribution of Public Treasury

Imam Ja'far Sadiq said: "Muslims are the worthy sons of Islam and I do not discriminate between them in the matter of distributing shares from the Public Treasury. These open merits and good qualities for example priority in embracing Islam, superiority in knowledge, piety, and jihad etc. are the concerns of the Day of Judgment and not of the Public Treasury". (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XI, p. 81)

It seems what the Holy Imam said was in reply to the people's wrong thinking and expectations according to which they were waiting for special regard on account of the good qualities which they possessed. They thought that they would get a greater share from the Public Treasury in his statement removed their misconceptions and rejected their false hopes.

Indeed, if we give the pious and the virtuous people a large share from the Public Treasury we shall be committing double errors: Firstly we have underrated the value of merits; and secondly we have made the sincerity of the meritorious people dubious, since we have diverted their attention towards worldly gains, and obviously if we assess the inner qualities and spiritual perfection through giving a greater or smaller share from the Public Treasury, it means that we have done an irreparable harm to merit and perfection and to those who tread that path.

Strong Criticism by Imam Ali

Imam Ali used to supervise the duties of the government officials himself, and appointed regular and secret reporters for that purpose. The people were free to bring to the Holy Imam complaints against the government officials. One of such complaints was about a government official in Persia (Iran).

The nature of the complaint was that the government official was discriminating between his relatives and the general public and allotted a larger share from the Public Treasury to his relatives. The Holy Imam warned him and wrote to him. "There should be no difference whatsoever between your relations and the rest of the Muslims". (Sharh Nahjul Balagha, by Muhammad Abduh, vol. III, p. 76).

Imam Ali's Admonition to Umar

Imam Ali used to admonish Caliph Umar. He said to him: "Be very-careful about the following three basic problems:

(i) You should not adopt any discrimination between the criminals when you award them punishments.

(ii) Make just decision according to Divine law both when you are angry or in a happy mood.

(iii) Do not be partial to any family in giving shares from the Public Treasury. (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XVIII, p. 156)

The gist of these counsels is that in enforcing the Divine laws one should not be influenced by his personal disposition of anger and pleasure and should not be partial because of personal relationship, family or tribal affiliations.

Imam Ali Walks out of the Court

In the days of the caliphate of Umar, a man filed a suit against Imam Ali and both the parties were summoned by the court. The Qazi (judge) who should have been impartial in talking to, even in looking at, and taking the names of both the parties showed distinction in taking the name of the Holy Imam and the other person.

He addressed Imam Ali by calling his name with due respect and regard with his patronymic appellation, and the other man with his usual name. At this the Holy Imam became displeased and walked out of the court-room after saying to the judge: "The judge should not discriminate between the two parties of the law suit. You made distinction in ealling out my name with more respect. That is not the way of administering justice in the Islamic way". (Vide: The Voice of Human Justice, by George Jordac, ISP, 1982)

This incident points out to the fact that even a man of the caliber of Imam Ali was brought to an ordinary court of law against an ordinary citizen and that no special time or place for the hearing of the case. This also signifies the importance of justice and equity in Islam.

Obstinacy in Discussions and Actions

From the careful study of the Holy Qur'an we find that there is an aspect of justice pervading all affairs and in all the laws and commandments, moderation and impartiality. We quote hereunder some instances:

(i) When Islam wants to prohibit drinking of liquor it first points out to its apparent benefits which accrue from its distillation and sale and its advantages from the medical point of view. But later it points out that its harmful effects far exceed its benefits. In this respect the Holy Qur'an says:

Muhammad, they ask you about wine and gambling. Tell them that there is great sin in them. Although they have benefits for men, the sin therein is far greater than the benefits. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:219)

(ii) In spite of all the characteristic qualities that are found in Islamic ideology, the Holy Qur'an does not at all neglect the past Scriptures. The Holy Qur'an says:

He has sent the Book (Qur'an) to you (Muhammad) in all Truth. It confirms the Bible. He revealed the Torah (Taurat) and the Gospel (Injil) as a guide for the people and now He has revealed the Furqan (criterion of discerning right from wrong). (Surah Ale Imran, 3:3)

(iii) The Holy Qur'an does not consider the people of the formerly revealed Books that is, the Jews and Christians altogether dishonest but says that there are some among them who are so honest that they return to their owners the property in whatever quantity it is kept in their custody, while there are some dishonest and mean persons who misappropriate even one single coin if it is kept in trust with them. The Holy Qur'an says:

There are some among the people of the Scripture who return the treasure entrusted to them, yet there are some who do not return even a dinar until you demand and insist, because they say: 'We cannot be blamed for usurping the rights of the heathens'. (Surah Ale Imran, 3.75)

This declaration of the Holy Prophet about those who had not accepted his invitation to Islam, was a glaring example of justice and equity.

It has been the method of Islam that the moral code was always observed in matters where discussions and debate exceed the limit of justness and quest for finding the truth and when the disputes were likely to take an unreasonable stand, one should withdraw oneself from the discussion even though one may happen to be on the right.

Justice Towards Polytheists and Infidels

Islam ordains that we should be just not only to its followers but also to the enemies even in times of war.

If the enemies kill you, you people should also kill them because that is the only punishment for the infidels. At this moment killing is the only just action otherwise it will amount to cowardice and timidity. But it should be borne in mind that you should not attack them first; rather, just as they attack you, you should also do similarly. The Holy Qur'an says:

And fight those (who fight you) where so ever you find them and expel them from the place from where they expelled you. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:191)

Do not kill anyone whom Allah has forbidden you to kill without a just cause. Whoever is killed unjustly, We have given the heir of that person the right to demand satisfaction or to forgive. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:33)

This verse points out to the custom of the Age of Ignorance that whenever a man of a certain family was killed his entire family rose in vengeance and unless several people of the other family were killed the matter was not settled.

But against this wild fanaticism, the Holy Qur'an ordains justice, and says not to exceed the limits of retaliation and vengeance. It allowed only to kill one person who was the actual killer or to demand the blood money.

Imam Ali after sustaining a fatal wound at the hands of his assassin advised his two worthy sons, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn besides giving other instructions, not to indulge in mass killing but to kill only the wretched killer, Ibn Muljam. He further said: "He (the assassin) struck once on me and therefore you should also give him one stroke". (See: Letter 47, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

This is a unique example of justice which Imam Ali upheld even at the moment when he was lying in a pool of blood.

Islam sanctified a particular area of land as a Sanctuary and within its bounds fighting is prohibited so much so that even hunting of animals and

uprooting of the grass from the earth are not permitted. The Holy Qur'an says:

Do not fight them in the vicinity of Ka'ba unless they start to fight; then fight them for it is the recompense that the disbelievers deserve. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:191)

It is because of their disrespect of a sacred month that you are also allowed to retaliate against them in a sacred month. If anyone transgresses against you, you also may retaliate against them to an equal extent. Have fear of Allah and know that He supports the pious. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:194)

Allah does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who have not fought against you about the religion or expelled you from your homes. Allah does not love the unjust people. (Surah al-Mumtahanah. 60:8)

If you want retaliation, let it be equal to that which you faced. But if you exercise patience it will be better for you.(Surah an-Nahl, 16:126)

Believers, be steadfast for the cause of Allah and be just in bearing witness. Let not a group's hostility to you cause you to deviate from justice. Be just, for it is closer to piety. Have fear of Allah, He is Aware of what you do. (Surah al-Maidah, 5:8)

There are several verses of the Holy Qur'an in this behalf, but before we wind up this discussion we mention another verse with some elaboration:

Do not accuse anyone, who claims himself to be a Muslim, of disbelief just for worldly gain. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:94)

In connection with this verse we briefly mention the following incident:

The Holy Prophet sent some people to find out the condition of the Jews of Khaybar so that the Muslims might be prepared beforehand to deal with them. One of the Jews hid his property in a mountain and then came out to welcome the Muslims, and informed them that he had embraced Islam.

But the Muslims made haste and said that he was only pretending to save his life and property and there and then killed him. At this the Qur'anic verse was revealed, ordaining that if someone says that he has embraced Islam they should not say that he is not a Muslim and should not kill him and loot his property.

They should shun such hasty decisions. At the same time they should not hastily believe an enemy who pretends to be Muslim, without making proper investigation, and as such they should neither be in haste to kill him nor easily believe what he says.

In short we should adopt the path of truth which defends social justice that is, we should adopt the path of thorough investigation. Our principle of social justice means that while we are fighting against our opponents we should behave with justice and love towards those who are harmless, and we should harshly treat those who are wicked and oppressive and punish them as they deserve.

Blood-money and Retaliation Ensure Justice

The Holy Qur'an says:

Believers, in case of murder, the death penalty is the sanctioned retaliation, a free man for a free man, a slave for a slave and a female for a female. However, if the convicted person receives pardon from the

aggrieved party, the prescribed rules of compensation must be followed accordingly. This is a concession and a kindness from your Lord. He who transgresses against it shall suffer painful punishment. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:178)

The literal meaning of the word qisas (retaliation) is "following suit". Since the heir of the man who is killed by someone, treat him in the same way that is they follow his action by killing him. The term qisas means death penalty.

In the Age of ignorance, (before the advent of Islam) it was a custom with the Arabs that whenever a man was killed by someone, the family men of the murdered man used to massacre the whole family of the murderer. It was therefore to abolish this ghastly practice that the Holy Qur'an ordained death penalty, that is, man for man, slave for slave, woman for woman and not the whole lot of family members.

In Islam the injunction of death penalty is very just, because unlike the Jewish law it does not entirely depend on retaliation, nor does it have recourse to only forgiveness or blood-money as it is with present day Christians, because insistence on death penalty sometimes creates complications. Hence, to make it obligatory is unwise.

For instance if the murderer and the murdered ones happen to be the two brothers, then in that ease compulsion of the death penalty will lead to a still more gruesome tragedy for the family, because for the sake of one brother another brother would have to be sentenced to death by law.

On the other side the condoning of the death penalty by means of the demand of the blood-money will give as a general rule an encouragement to murder. Therefore, in Islam the basic law provides death penalty but it has also a provision of pardon by means of paying the blood-money to the murdered man's relatives, who can choose between the two options.

The Law of Qisas (Retaliation) in the Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an says:

In the Taurat We made obligatory for the Jews the code of retaliation Capital punishment for the murder of a person, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth and a wound for a wound. If the perpetrator is forgiven by the affected party this will be an expiation of his crime. Those who do not judge according to what Allah has revealed are unjust. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:45)

In certain narrations we find that there lived in Madina during the time of the Holy Prophet two famous tribes of the Jews Bani Nuzayr and Bani Qurayzah. Bani Nuzayr were boastful people. If someone of their tribe happened to kill a man of the tribe of Bani Qurayzah he was not sentenecd to death, but if the murderer belonged to Bani Qurayzah the death penalty was enforced upon him and he was instantly killed.

But when Islam came, it eliminated undue discriminations among various sections and classes of people. Bani Nuzayr who by then had embraced Islam requested the Holy Prophet to continue the practice of bragging as well one sided death penalty so as to give them their usual advantage. But the Holy Prophet rejected their request outright and said: "The justness

underlying the rules of retaliation is not only characteristic of Islam but it is found in Taurat also. (Tafsir Namuna, Vide: Surah al-Ma'ida, 5:45)

If somebody deliberately murders someone without any just excuse the heirs of the murdered man can slay the murderer quite justifiably. If someone strikes somebody in the eye and blinds him, the victim can also do the same to the offender.

Cutting the nose for nose and ear for ear of the offender is permissible. Similarly, if someone breaks somebody's tooth or inflicts a wound the latter can do the same to the former.

Thus the injunction of the rules of retaliation in Islam operates equitably in all cases without any consideration of racial, social, tribal and personality differences.

Moderation in Worship

It is necessary to throw some light on the subject of moderation in offering prayers. It has been stressed in our traditions that we should not force upon ourselves recommended prayers if we are not fully prepared for it, as we should perform such prayers with a free and willing heart.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq said. "Do not load yourself with prayers" (Usul Kafi, vol. II, p. 86)

In another tradition we read as follows: "Do not thrust prayers on the servants of Allah. It has particularly been insisted that children should be given more freedom and they should not be strictly asked to perform recommended prayers".

There are several other traditions on this subject.

Moderation in Appreciation and Criticism

As it has already been said adopting moderation and justice is the guiding principle of a Muslim's life. Among other things which should be given importance to are undue praise and undue criticism which leave a harmful effect on individuals and the society as a whole.

Imam Ali says: "If you exceed the limit in praising somebody you will be a sycophant and if you belittle the worth of a deserving person, you are narrow-minded or jealous as you cannot bear to praise others". (See: Sayings of Imam Ali, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

Thus we should be just and moderate in praising others. In this respect Imam Ali says: "Being too much critical rebounds upon ourselves and stubbornness gives rise to bad feelings". (Tuhuful 'Uqul)

The parents should be advised to realize that over-indulgence spoils the child.

The Holy Prophet says: "In the latter times the undue love and over-indulgence of the children will make them self-conceited but it does not mean that they should be deprived of their due love".

In the traditions we learn that parents should behave with their children like a child and should be one with them in their play, pastimes, and conversation, so as to satisfy their psychological demands.

Moderation in Expenditure and Charities

Though we are primarily concerned with social justice in our current discussion, yet from the Holy Qur'an and the traditions we find many other things which are not outside the purview of our discussion. Among them is the problem of general expenditure and charities.

Islam has also adopted a medium course in regard to these matters like other such things. In praise of the virtuous people the Holy Qur'an says:

Who are neither prodigal nor miserly in their spending but maintain moderation. (Surah al-Furqan, 25:67)

Do not be niggardly, nor over-generous, lest you should become reprehensive and constrained. (Surah Bani Isra'il,17:29)

In our traditions in matters of economics too, moderation has been greatly stressed.

Justice in Personal Life

The Holy Qur'an says:

If you cannot maintain equality with more than one wife, marry only one or any slave-girls you may own. That will make easier for you to avoid injustice. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:3)

The Holy Prophet even when he was in his death-bed took care of doing justice to his wives, as he used to get his bed shifted to the chamber of the wife who had turn on that night.

Ayesha, one of the wives of the Holy Prophet said: "The Holy Prophet never gave preference to one wife over another; he treated them all alike. He used to visit every one of his wives daily and inquired of their welfare, but every one of them had her own turn.

If he wanted to stay with someone of them when it was not her turn he first asked the permission of the concerned wife". Thereafter, she further said, "But I never gave my turn to any of the Holy Prophet's wife".

When Imam Ali had two wives and if he wanted to perform ablution, he would not do it in the house of the wife whose turn did not fall on that particular time. Of course, the spirit of justice should permeate through our social structure.

Moderation in Frugality

In Islam the system of frugality is also based on moderation and justice in the sense that exercising thrift should not be to the extent that no deserving person is deprived of his due share or rights, and every rightful claimant should be allowed to lead a comfortable life according to his needs.

Output of Work

Islam advises division of work for various purposes so that time may be allocated to different pieces of work including worship of Allah, picnics and lawful enjoyments. In this way all our material and spiritual needs can be fulfilled. (Sayings of Imam Ali, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

If in the event one's work is so extended as to restrain the work of another person, the officer in charge can put a check on this practice. For instance, if some people developed a barren land by the sweat of their brow, they would become its owner according to law which says: "One who develops a barren land becomes its owner".

If such a development of the land leads to deprivation of others and the social structure becomes unsound, the Islamic government can limit the extent of such a development so as to do justice to others also"(Iqtisaduna, by Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr)

Islam has prohibited indulging in destructive work.

Justice in Distribution of Property

Imam Ali says: "The far-off tract of land should be equally treated like the nearby areas". (Letter 53, Peak of Eloquence)

The State's budget should be equally allocated among all sections of the society. It should not be such that people living near the capital city may get a greater share.

Like Prophet Shu'ayb many of the Prophets, after inviting the people to the belief in monotheism and prophethood, gave the first priority to the just distribution of wealth and honest use of weights and measures in business transactions. The Holy Qur'an says:

Maintain just measure in your business and do not cheat. Weigh your goods with proper balance and do not defraud people in their property or spread evil in the land. (Surah Shu'ara, 26:181-183)

Woe to those who are fraudulent who demand a full measure from others but when they measure or weigh, give less. (Surah Mutaffifin, 83:1-3)

Justice in Sharing and Spending

In Islam justice is to be observed in spending also. The Holy Qur'an says:

You may eat their fruits that they produce but pay Allah's share on the harvest day. (Surah al-An'am, 6:141)

Children of Adam, dress well when attending the masjid, eat and drink but do not be excessive for Allah does not love those who are excessive. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:31)

We allowed you to consume the pure sustenance which We had given you but not to become rebels, lest you should become subjected to My Torment. (Surah Ta Ha, 20:8l)

Imam Ali tells us the signs and characteristics of virtuous people as follows: "They wear simple dress". (Usul Kafi, vol. II)

Imam Ja'far Sadiq says: "If people adopt moderation in matters of eating, their bodies will be strong and healthy". (Nizamut Tarbavi Fil Islam, p. 376)

In this connection the Holy Qur'an says:

Use what you have acquired as your own good lawful property. Have fear o f Allah. He is All-Forgiving and All-Merciful. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:69) 187

That is, what we eat should be lawful, pure, and of our liking, and we should observe the rules of piety in obtaining it.

To Establish Justice Prophet's Instructions Should be Followed

In life men interest clashes with that of another man and there arise disputes and confrontations. In such a circumstance everybody considers himself on the right or refuses to withdraw from the stand he has falsely

taken. On such occasions Islam guides the people to refer to the Holy Prophet. The Holy Qur'an says:

Believers, obey Allah, His Messenger and your (qualified) leaders. If you have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgement; refer to Allah and His Messenger concerning matters in which you differ. This would be a more virtuous and a better way of settling differences. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:59)

The following tradition of the Holy Prophet is of special consideration which says: "Religious scholars (ulema) are the successors to the Prophets".

Therefore whenever there is a dispute between you and there is a danger of deviation from the path of justice and violation of each other's rights you should approach the pious and just religious scholars so as to obtain their verdict in accordance with the commandments of Allah. (Vide: Wilayat-i Faqih, Imam Khumayni)

Anyone who does not go to a mujtahid (a leading religious jurist) and instead carries his personal disputes to the irreligious courts of law and seeks justice from those oppressors should give a second thought to his faith, because he is mistaken to think that he is a Muslim. The Holy Qur'an says.

O Muhammad! Have you seen those who think that they have faith in what is revealed to you and to others before you, yet they take their affairs to evil powers for judgement though they are commanded to ignore them. Satan only wants to deviate them from the right path. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:60)

Jurist is Responsible For the Supervision of Social Justice

Allah created us and showed us the ways of achieving our eternal prosperity by following the teachings of the Holy Prophet of Islam. The Prophet is responsible for the social uplift, preservation of the rights and the guidance of the people. After the Holy Prophet the responsibility falls on the Holy Imams who are like the Prophet in their merits, abilities and infallibility. They shoulder the responsibility of guiding the people to the right path.

In the absence of the Imams, this responsibility falls on the shoulders of the religious scholars, and jurists, who besides possessing a keen sense of justice, thorough religious knowledge, political acumen and administrative abilities have the capacity to deduce the true meaning of the Qur'anic verses and the narrations of the infallible Imams.

But in order that they may be called "faqih" (Jurist) they must possess a thorough knowledge of all branches of knowledge so that they may interpret correctly the Qur'anic verses.

In the message that has come down to us from our Last Holy Imam Mahdi, we are guided in these words: "Do not be self-willed and do not make haste while facing hardships and difficulties in arriving at a decision. Instead go to a right jurist whom you consider above all wordly and temporal desires so that he may give you a correct guidance to follow the right path of Allah". (Kitab al-Kamaluddin, narrated from Wilayat-i Faqih)

Guardianship of Jurist Ensures Social Justice

Imam Ali Riza says: "If Allah had not appointed an Imam who could take the reins of the government in his hand and administer justice, the

entire social structure would have collapsed and everything would have gone topsy-tervy". ('Ilalush Sharaya', vol. I, p. 172)

Another tradition says: "The jurists are the trustees of the Prophets". (Walayat-i Faqih)

Therefore we should turn to the jurists for a just solution of their social problems. Abu Khudayja who was a trusted companion of Imam Ja'far Sadiq was deputed on behalf of the Holy Imam to ask the people: "Turn to the just jurists for the settlement of your disputes.

They will give their decision in accordance with the Divine laws. While choosing a jurist you should be sure that he is the one who strictly follows the instructions he receives from us in respect of lawful and unlawful things. I appoint only such jurists for you". (Walayat-i Faqih)

Sometimes we come across a certain problem about which there appears to be no manifest orders in the Holy Qur'an or the traditions but their perfect signs, criteria, principles and rules are fully within the reach of a jurist, who can with the command of his knowledge, find out the solution to the problem in question.

A Story Regarding Rights

Among many kinds of freedom that man has been given by Islam one is about his right of privacy in his house. Nobody is allowed to enter another man's house without his permission. The Holy Qur'an says:

Believers, do not enter others' houses until you have asked permission and have greeted the people therein. This is best for you, so that perhaps you may remember Allah's guidance. (Surah an-Nur, 24:27)

There was a man named Samurah. Though he was a companion of the Holy Prophet yet he was a trespasser who was self-willed and self-conceited. He was in the habit of going into the garden of another companion without obtaining his permission, and there he used to feast his eyes on the latter's wife and children. For this evil action of his he put forward an excuse that at the corner of the garden he had a tree of his own, for the care of which he used to come over there.

The other companion told Samurah that he had no objection to his coming over there to look after his tree, but he should first inform him of his arrival before entering the garden so that his wife and children might keep themselves secluded. But the stubborn man did not agree and said: "It is not necessary for me to seek permission".

After all the owner of the garden complained to the Holy Prophet against that trespasser. The Holy Prophet called Samurah and admonished him, but to no effect. The Holy Prophet asked him to exchange his tree with another one at a different place, but he did not agree to it. The Holy Prophet asked him to sell his tree to the owner of the garden.

He still did not agree. Thereafter, the Holy Prophet asked him to enter the garden at least after taking the permission of the owner. He did not agree to that also. Finally, the Holy Prophet told him to leave his tree for good as he promised him a tree in Paradise. At that also he remained adamant. The Holy Prophet knew that his intention was to create mischief only and therefore, he ordered that man's tree to be pulled out from its roots and thrown away". (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XVII, p. 340)

Hence, in Islam no one should harm anybody nor anybody should get himself harmed by anyone.

Reasons for Turning Away From Justice

There are two main reasons for turning away from justice. The Holy Qur'an has laid emphasis on both. One of the reasons of a man's deviation from justice is his personal interest, and his love for his relations and friends. The Holy Qur'an says:

Believers, be the supporters of justice and the witnesses for Allah, even against yourselves, parents and relatives, regardless of their being rich or poor. Allah must be given preference over them. Let not your desires cause you to commit injustice. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:135)

The second reason why a man turns away from the path of justice is the troubles which he receives from an individual or a group of individuals. The Holy Qur'an says:

Believers, be steadfast for the cause of Allah and just in bearing witness. Let not a group's hostility cause you to deviate from justice. Be just for it is closer to piety. Have fear of Allah. Allah is Well-Aware of what you do. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:8)

The third cause which makes man deviate from the path of justice is the giving and taking of bribes. The Holy Qur'an says:

Do not use your property among yourselves in illegal ways and then deliberately bribe the rulers with your property so that you may sinfully acquire the property of others. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:188)

Suppose a judge gives a decision in your favour and you know that it was the result of the bribe that you gave him and the property that comes under your possession is unlawful, thus the apparent decision of the judge, in reality does not confer the right of ownership of the property on you.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq says. "Bribing a judge into a decision in one's favour is the great disobedience to Allah". (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. II)

There is also a well-known hadith of the Holy Prophet which says: "Those who give bribe or take bribe are deprived of Allah's Mercy".

It should be borne in mind that some people give this evil deed misleading names like, gift, present, tip, compensation and the reward of secrecy etc. Some people informed the Holy Prophet that a certain man had accepted a bribe in the form a present.

The Holy Prophet felt displeased and asked the man: "Why do you accept a thing for which you have no right?" The man replied: "What I have taken is only a present and not a bribe". The Holy Prophet said, "If you remain sitting in your house and are not an official appointed by me would the people in that case offer you present?"

Islam has taken so much care that it says that the judge should not go to the market to buy things for himself lest any concession in price given to him should influence him into becoming partial to the merchant in his decision.

The Verse Which Made the Holy Prophet Feel Old

The Holy Prophet said: "There is a verse in Surah "Hud" which has made me feel old". The relevant verse of the Holy Qur'an is as follows:

Muhammad, be steadfast (in your faith) just as you have been commanded. (Surah Hud, 11:112)

If we look into the meaning of this verse we think that one's remaining steadfast and firm is not a big problem for in the Holy Qur'an there are also other verses which ask the Holy Prophet to remain steadfast and firm.

But in this particular verse the stress on the words "as you have been commanded" is meaningful, because steadfastness is sometimes based on obstinacy as partiality and not on the command of Allah.

Sometimes the people's taunts make a man steadfast lest they should say that he gave up his steadfastness because of fear. Sometimes a man wants to show off his forbearance; hence he becomes steadfast. In all such cases steadfastness loses its significance in the eyes of Allah as it was not motivated by sincerity. The Holy Qur'an says:

And those who exercise patience to gain Allah's pleasure, who are steadfast in prayers, who spend for the cause of Allah privately and in public and who keep away evil with good will have blissful end. (Surah Ra'd, 13:22)

In short, to be just and to follow the path of Allah is a difficult task for which the Prophets seek the help of Allah and perhaps the "Bridge or the Path", which is thinner than a hair and sharper than the edge of a sword, and which all of us have to pass through, is the same Divine path of the world.

Social Justice is For Public Welfare

The vehicles pass along on the right side in our country in order to regulate the smooth flow of traffic. Hence, it any of the drivers violates the traffic rules other drivers start blowing horns so as to put a check on him.

Besides, the police on duty also intervenes and fines him for violation of traffic rules. And in the absence of the police people themselves inform against the offender. Under these circumstances very few drivers can dare violate the traffic rules.

This was an example. Now if we want that we should not get out of the bounds of law and justice we should adhere to the following two fundamental principle of human conduct:

(i) amr bil ma'ruf (enjoining the right) and

(ii) nahi 'anil munkar (forbidding the wrong).

Thus we should not remain indifferent to anything which is wrong and unlawful and everyone of us should always try to do our job correctly so that we should set an example for others to follow and the transgressor may be forced to do good deeds.

We are looking forward to seeing the day when the cultural revolution of Islam will reach all the universities of the world. It will be the day when a physician who is not able to diagnose a malady, will honestly admit he could not know the nature of the disease.

Not only that he will guide the patient to refer to a specialist so that the patient should receive proper attention at the hands of an expert. That will be the day when social justice will permeate our entire social order.

Prophethood

The Divine outlook on the Universe and what we know of man and the world lead us to believe in the necessity of the Prophets for if there is any purpose of the creation of the Universe and if it is running on set principles, then there must be a set course of action also for man who is a part of this world and that course should be free from all defects and errors and it is that of the Prophets. If man's path is not like that he will be an irregular patch on face of the earth.

If there is any real purpose of man's coming into existence it becomes necessary that he should determine his destination and achieve an everlasting prosperity. But without the proper guidance of the true path this cannot be achieved and it is the Prophets only who can guide us to that path. Since man is apt to err and forget, he needs somebody who can warn him and guide him at every stage. Therefore, the Prophets give warnings to the society about the dangers that lie ahead of it.

If man is held responsible for his actions and his deeds will be accounted for before Allah, then he should be reminded by someone of his responsibilities, duties and obligations. And in this regard there can be no one but the Holy Prophets of Allah.

If man is supposed to build his character he must have before him a perfect example whom he should follow. In this regard there can be none except the Holy Prophets of Allah to guide him.

If a man is supposed to think of his future, then he must have someone who should explain to him of his future. In this respect also nobody but the Holy Prophets can set an example for the people.

On the contrary in the materialistic outlook on the Universe there is no such concept of Prophethood because in this form of approach there is no such program as prearranged course of action or purpose of man's creation.

According to it man has come into existence without any definite purpose or program of action and as such he will ultimately have to perish like other matter.

It is due to the Divine outlook on the Universe that the institution of Prophethood is deeply rooted in the lives of the Muslims. That is to say the Divine outlook of the Universe is the only means through which we can reach the human and Islamic goal without any doubt and sense of uncertainty and that is the path which is the source of Allah's revelation and Infinite Knowledge, and Allah is Well-Aware of the causes of our prosperity and misfortunes.

The path which attracts mankind to itself and which is free from selfish motives and self-aggrandizement is the path of the Prophets.

We are living in this modern age of advancement of science and technology and we witness various types of crimes, corruptions and transgressions of various nations because they have abandoned the path which the Holy Prophets had directed them to follow. They have by their inventions and discoveries set up a sort of blazing fire in which they thrust the people.

In the meetings that they hold for protecting the mankind from poverty and tyrannies they exercise their right of veto. Despite the fact that there are

millions of starving people in the world they spend their money in the armament race. Although there are available means of comfort and luxuries there seems to be no real comfort and peace of mind, and in order to find a relief from the agonies the people are resorting to suicide, drinking, tranquillizers, and other narcotics.

Looking at this sad and sordid state of affairs, can anybody fail to realize that this troubled world needs a straight path of salvation and an infallible guide and leader to lead the people to their ultimate destiny.

Sign of Inability to Recognize Allah

Under the guidance of our intellect we have selected the Divine outlook on the Universe and have accepted that there is a purpose of the creation. It is moving on a fixed path. All the creations are within the reach of mankind under Allah's supervision because they have been created for their benefits.

Under such a circumstance how can one believe that man who is the vicegerent of Allah on this earth and who is the most superior creature of Allah will be left in the lurch without any set principles of guidance and a straight path shown by a guide and a leader? Does this sort of wrong thinking conform to the Divine Wisdom? We can only find an answer to this from the Holy Qur'an which says:

But they failed to make the just estimation of Allah when they said: 'He did not reveal to any man anything'. (Surah al-An am, 6:91)

Really how is it possible that Allah who has created all his creations for man can leave him alone without any proper guidance? If that be so it will be contrary to the Wisdom of Allah and if anybody thinks so he has not recognized Allah.

The importance of the Prophets and their teachings becomes clear to us when we compare the Divine ideology with the human ideology, we become aware of the defects of human ideology and introduce those ideal people, who have been guided by the teachings of the Holy Prophets, to others.

The Role of Knowledge and Intellect

Islam lays a great emphasis on knowledge and intellect so much so that it considers intellect as an inner Prophet and as such has determined rewards and punishments on the basis of intellect. The Holy Qur'an often exhorts us to use our wisdom. In many of the verses, the Holy Qur'an has addressed those who possess wisdom and power of reasoning.

Islam has given best instances for defining wisdom. It says that it is through wisdom that worship of Allah is best accomplished. In the traditions of our infallible Imams knowledge and intellect have been given more importance than anything else. Thus whenever somebody says about a man's profuse worship the Holy Imams only ask as to how that man thinks?

In all the reliable books of traditions (ahadith) the first chapter is about intellect and knowledge and their importance. No other school of thought except Islam has considered it worthwhile or compulsory for people to acquire knowledge and wisdom.

The extent to which Islam has given importance to knowledge and intellect during the days of the Age of Ignorance has no parallel until the present age.

Even if we find a man who spends his life in the acquisition of knowledge from the cradle to the grave, expands knowledge of all kinds from animals to heavens, to friends and adversaries and conquers the space and the heavenly bodies we shall be in need of the knowledge and wisdom of the Holy Prophets.

Necessity of Prophets' Guidance

(i) Limitation of Knowledge:

Man has a limited knowledge. The number of schools and sciences and arts is increasing day by day. Man is continuously making inventions and discoveries. To leave man on his knowledge and intellect is to leave him alone unguided because men's intellect, knowledge and thinking differ. Many serious and dangerous differences start from the learned and wise people. How then can they resolve the differences and disputes among the people?

One man considers one thing proper while the other one considers it improper according to his knowledge and mode of thinking. The fact is that man's knowledge is limited. He has no sufficient knowledge of the past nor of the future; nor is he aware of the immediate or gradual reaction to what he aims at.

How wise it is to say that as compared to man's ignorance his knowledge is so infinitesimal as a drop in the ocean or for reaching the celestial heights his knowledge is only like a small stair-case. The everyday changes and amendments made in the laws by various nations and their ficklemindedness are the positive proof of man's imperfect and limited knowledge.

(ii) Hurdles in the Way of Recognition:

On the subject of recognition there is a discussion about the hurdles that come in its way. Though man possesses intelligence and power of reasoning, he is so entangled in the whirlpool of his innate weaknesses that he loses the tendency of knowing the truth.

The Holy Qur'an and the traditions have paid great attention to these hurdles. Anger, sexual inclinations, personal considerations, partialities and other such things are a stumbling-block in the way of one's knowing the truth.

Example: For travelling by train, bus or plane tickets are issued for the purpose of maintaining discipline and this can only be achieved if the ticket issuing person exercises impartiality, but if somebody pays more and obtains the ticket, or the ticket issuing person is influenced by personal consideration of friendship or regional or social affiliations, the issuing of tickets will not be done in a just manner.

Thus how can we entrust the job of making legislation for the society to those whose affiliations and inclinations influence their decision?

In short, man does not have the right to legislate and enact laws for the people, because he is a slave of his wishes and is not capable of recognizing the truth. The Holy Qur'an says:

The final judgement is in the Hands of Allah. He reveals the Truth and He is the best judge. (Surah al-An'am, 6:57)

When we talk of the Islamic legislative assembly making the legislations and enacting laws we do not mean actually enacting of laws but we mean that we bring the legislations and the laws in conformity with the Divine commandments.

(iii) Knowledge Becomes Perfect After Centuries:

It is with the passage of time, that is as when time passes and the knowledge increases man understands some realities. But whom shall we hold responsible for the delay of centuries of years in knowing these realities?

For instance, it is more than half a century now that it was established that eating of pork causes the growth of pin worms in the intestines and man has come to know of this truth after a passage of several hundreds of years, but only those who became aware of the fact by Divine revelations that eating of pork is forbidden have been safe from its injurious effects for centuries.

In Islam there are dozens of other commands whose justification has been discovered after the passage of time and with the advancement of knowledge, but the followers of the ways of the Holy Prophets adopted from the very beginning the right path. But those who depended upon their researches and experiments discovered those hidden facts after centuries.

(iv) Divine Revelations and the Prophets:

Man is only able to solve his materialistic problems by virtue of his knowledge, wisdom and power of reasoning but he cannot discover the right path of eternal prosperity and spiritual enlightenment without adopting the path shown by the Holy Prophets.

(v) Conscience is Not the Only Criterion:

In answer to those people who think that man's conscience is the only guide which directs him to the right course of action and hence, it is not necessary to follow any Prophets, we should like to say that our conscience is subservient to our will and it is influenced by environment, social customs and rites, it does not lead us to the right path.

In this context the example of smoking can be cited. In the beginning smoking leaves a bad taste in the mouth of smoker but gradually he becomes used to it and starts liking it, but a right thinking man will from the very beginning reject it altogether. We also know of people who could not bear the sight of slaughtering the cattle as their conscience did not approve of this act but after the repeated slaughtering of the cattle, their conscience do experience a change.

Under these circumstances man's conscience cannot be relied upon as every man's conscience is guided by individual experience and knowledge of things. For instance if we have not seen a person committing any sin or a serious crime and we find that he is shot before a firing squad, a queer feeling is roused in our mind but a man who was in the know of this man's unpardonable deed will not be moved by emotional feelings.

But despite all this we do not altogether reject the natural and moral impact of a man's conscious. Imam says: "Prophets came to enliven man's disposition and tendencies".

However, our discussion centres upon whether can we depend only on the dictates of our conscience? The answer to this is certainly in negative.

(vi) Feeling of Uncertainty:

Another thing, which makes man feel the necessity of the Prophets and lose confidence in man made laws and regulations is the natural doubt which a man entertains in his mind. As for example man feels that he has made laws only after depending on his own knowledge and intellect and thus doubts arise on the following points:

(i) How could they then be able to fully comprehend all aspects of human nature and how could they conceive the total requirements of human beings?

(ii) How could they inculcate in themselves the spirit of human welfare?

(iii) How could they be immune from errors and forgetfulness while enacting laws and code of human conduct?

(iv) How could they ignore the interest of individual or group of individuals and how could they not have deviated from personal considerations of family or economical affiliations?

(v) How could the individuals or the society have not reacted against the laws made by them?

These are a few examples of uncertainty and doubts. These doubts have now turned into beliefs about the fallibility of those who profess to be the champions of the cause of human rights and welfare of the society.

Thus as a result of the sad experience of imperfect laws hardly anyone would appear to be satisfied and if at all in some areas these laws made by political upstarts and demagogues are being followed, it is simply for materialistic way of life or it is just because of the fear of punishment or harsh treatment by the government in power. Such people unlike the followers of the Prophets do not feel an internal love, a spirit of virtue and purity in themselves.

In fact, why should a man, who is born as a free subject, behave like a vassal? True, such considerations weaken the spirit of obeying man-made laws. This lack of confidence and disinterestedness becomes apparent when man does not find any encouragement about following these laws, because when he finds that in the event of violation he is severely punished by the court of law or other law-enforcing agencies, but he is never rewarded for following these man-made laws in his whole life.

Such a thing is in contrast with the Divine laws which have laid down severe punishments for the sinners and incorrigible defaulters on the one hand and has assured of a good reward in the Hereafter for the pious and the devout Muslims. In the Divine religion the human efforts have been so much appreciated that even if a man walks a step for a noble cause he will be rewarded for that. This characteristic only belongs to the code of conduct prescribed by the Holy Prophets.

An Example: Just imagine a host who has invited to dinner some guests but they do not know the way to the host's house and the path that they have

followed has lanes and streets, and besides there are people to misguide them and also there are wild animals and the dark and horrible night! Under such a situation there will be two following alternatives left for the host:

(i) Either he should abandon the idea of giving the feast or if the meals have been prepared already, he should throw them away.

(ii) Or he should send a trusted guide with a lantern and arms to bring the guests to his home otherwise the very purpose of inviting them would be defeated. After giving this vivid example we revert to the subject matter of our discussion.

If Allah, the Lord of the worlds, Who has created the Universe for the benefit of mankind and Who has invited us to worship Him and to attain eternal prosperity, had not sent a messenger like the Holy Prophet of Islam for the guidance of mankind with all his miracles glowing like a lantern, and in one hand with the Holy Qur'an serving as a complete guide to the right path and in another the strength and the sword, the Divine invitation to us would have become meaningless, because we did not know the right path because of doubts, diabolical inclinations, the following of the transgressors and despotic rulers, and because we were apt to fall into the ditch of polytheism, ignorance, corruptions and dissentions.

The purpose of sending the Prophets to mankind was to prepare man for his journey towards his real evolution. And for every journey there is the necessity of a guide who can show him, the direction, the beginning, the path and the destination. Of all the necessities of human life the necessity of a guide is of paramount importance, as without him man would adopt wrong means and would go astray.

Hence the very purpose of the teachings of the Prophets is to show that the Universe is created for the benefit of mankind and man is created to journey towards Allah. And this evolutionary process and journey cannot be accomplished without the teachings of the Holy Prophets, based on Divine revelations.

Difference Between Man's Knowledge And Prophets' Teachings

We have already stated that human knowledge stands no comparison with the knowledge of the Holy Prophets. We should like to recapitulate all those things briefly as under:

Knowledge controls natural phenomena while the Prophets control man himself. Knowledge provides with ways and means while the Prophets furnish with the purpose of life. Knowledge sharpens our wits, while the Prophets guide us.

Knowledge brings about an outward change, while the Prophets bring about inner changes also. Knowledge broadens the mental outlook, while the Prophets cultivate dignity and exaltation.

Knowledge is a lantern, while religion is both the lantern and the path.

The scholars have difference of opinion among themselves, but the path of the Prophets is the same. Sometimes knowledge is based on conjectures, that is man thinks that he has understood a certain thing but later he knows

that he had not understood anything, but the Divine revelation has nothing to do with conjectures.

We see that knowledge is expanding day by day, and yet we find that there is no decrease in corruptions and crimes.

Today when you fall sick you surrender yourself to a physician, and when your car is out of order, you hand it over to a motor mechanic.

Obviously the physician knows much more about your body ailments, and the mechanic knows more than you about the car, though he does not concern himself about it as much as you do. Therefore, it is imperative that we should submit ourselves to Allah and the teachings of His Prophets, because Allah knows more about us than we do, and is more Kind to us. The Holy Qur'an says:

Do they seek judgment of the Days of Ignorance? But who could be a better judge than Allah for those who are firm in their belief? (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:50)

Allah knows better about us because He created us, and the Creator knows all about His creations. The Holy Qur'an says:

Doesn 't the One, who is Subtle, All-Aware and who created all things, know all about them? (Surah al-Mulk, 67:14)

We quote here a fine narration from the Martyr Nawab Safawi. He said: "If you buy a thing from a factory it is necessary that the engineer who manufactured it should tell you how to use it, and nobody else has any right to give you instructions about it.

Similarly, man's position is not short of the position of manufactured articles. Hence, it is necessary that only Allah enacts laws for him as He is his Creator and, it is He who is Well-Aware of his temporal and spiritual needs and requirements and also of his future course of action and destiny in this world and the Hereafter".

Thus it is necessary that man should select for himself a path but the question arises as to how he should know that path?

(i) Should he determine it according to his own inclinations?

(ii) Or should he adopt the path others have chosen?

(iii) Or should he follow the path which the Holy Prophets have brought from Allah?

If we ponder over this matter a little carefully we shall approve only the third course, because our experience tells us that many a time we adopted a course of action but ultimately we had to abandon it after discovering our mistakes. You cannot give an example of any man who had not repented hundreds of times of what he had done in his life.

Our intellect and sense of proportion are affected by our lack of knowledge, personal weakness and sentiments, environmental influences and natural disposition and therefore we should not depend upon our own judgment in selecting the first course of action as pointed out above.

The second course of action is also not sound as the same things apply on the judgment of others like that of ours.

Thus the only course of action that remains for us to follow is the path of Allah which emanates from the Infinite Knowledge of Allah and which is

shown to us through the Divine revelations by the infallible Holy Prophets of Allah and as such we cannot afford to remain indifferent to it.

The Necessity of Following the Guidance of the Prophets

There are many arguments which lead us to follow the teachings of the Holy Prophets. We give below a few examples.

(i) The Holy Prophets brought about in their times great revolutions, which are preserved in the annals of history and they moved on towards the stage of martyrdom. Their achievements were acknowledged by all including friends and foes.

They possessed high qualities of personal behavior so much so that even their enemies could not accuse them of any fault. The Prophets in support of their teachings and view-points put forward clear proofs and evidences showed miracles and created a large number of their followers.

If we consider that the Prophets' sense of duty and their fear of Allah were the motivating factors for the propagation of the Divine Message, it will be sufficient reason for us to change our course and follow their course because according to the scholars we should avoid all possible risks of loss.

It cannot be said that the possibility of loss is less, because in the opinion of even a stubborn person howsoever less the possibility of loss may be since it entails hard and eternal torment, it turns our intellect towards the search of the path of those great personalities and makes us change our own path.

(ii) People have always been saying that we should try to learn morals from the insolent people by not doing things which they do. Here if we look to the enemies of the Prophets, we shall find that men like Abu Lahab, Abu Jahl and Abu Sufyan were the arch-enemies of the Holy Prophet, and nowadays big powers are bitterly opposed to the ways of the Holy Prophets. We can now trace the truth of the course of action of the Prophets from the opposition of these Satanic powers.

(iii) The third thing which prompts us to follow the teachings of the Prophets is that there is a tendency of appreciating and adopting a good and noble thing present in man. If man tries to look at the innumerable Blessings of Allah and realizes that he has really discovered the worldly and spiritual Blessings he will at once decide to follow the path which the Creator of all these Blessings has set for us especially when we keep this truth in view that in opposition to any law-making man Allah has never kept in view His personal interest or the interest of any particular community or group of people.

He did not want anything except our welfare and prosperity. In the Holy Qur'an Allah directs us to be truthful in acknowledging the favor of His Blessings:

Quraysh should worship the Lord of this House (Ka'bah). It is He Who fed them when they were hungry and has made them secure from fear. (Surah Quraysh, 106:3-4)

Prophets' Path-Mankind's Long-standing Desire

By his very nature man likes that law which is based on justice. He admires that type of government which is not established by a particular

class or group of people. He adores only that leader who is free from selfishness and sense of superiority and who leads a simple life. Equality, freedom, simplicity, truthfulness piety, and justice are man's inherent desires.

History bears testimony that such an ideal form of government based on justice was found with only those people who had before them the teachings of the Prophets, as the inherent desires and aspirations of mankind can only be fulfilled by following the teachings of the Prophets.

This fact is proved by the glaring example of the present day forms of government which are totally void of the teachings of the Prophets and the rulers have been exploiting and sucking the blood of the poor masses in every part of the world for over centuries. They are so deeply engrossed in racial discriminations, idolatry, oppressions and similar other inhuman activities.

The Prophets in the Mirror of the Holy Qur'an

Now that through wisdom we have realized the necessity of the Prophets, we should refer to some verses of the Holy Qur'an:

A Messenger is appointed for all people. When the Messenger for them came he judged among them fairly and they were not wronged. (Surah Yunus, 10:47)

We have sent you in all Truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner. (Surah Fatir, 35:24)

Surely, in Our Hands is the guidance. (Surah al-Layl, 92:12)

Who is a better judge for the people whose belief is based on certainty, than Allah. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:50)

Say, final authority only belongs to Allah. Had He wanted He would have given you all guidance. (Surah al-An'am, 6:150)

It means that after Allah made it clear about His argument, there remains no excuse on the part of the people that they could not distinguish between the right and wrong path as guided by Allah's infallible Prophets and it is Allah who will bring those people to task as they showed indifference to the teachings of the Holy Prophets.

(That day) when you were at one end of the valley and they (the unbelievers) at the other, and the caravan below you (on the low land by the coast) you would surely have declined to fight if the Makkans had offered you battle. But the battle did take place that Allah may end the matter which had been accomplished, so that he who had to die may perish after a clear demonstration, and he who had to live may survive in the light of positive proof, for Allah hears all and knows everything. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:42)

Indeed, there should be a clear difference between a straight path and a ditch so that we may select the right path with full freedom. The Holy Qur'an says:

The Messenger were sent to give people the glad tidings (of Allah's Mercy) and warn them (of His punishment) so that mankind would not have any argument against Allah.(Surah al-Nisa, 4:165)

The underlying idea behind this verse is that people would have put forward an excuse of their ignorance, and for every censure or criticism

against them they would have said that none had warned them. In this way the people's argument would have been justified. The Holy Qur'an says:

Had We destroyed them with a torment before the coming of Muhammad they would have said, 'Lord, would that you had sent us a messenger so that we could have followed Your revelations before being disgraced. (Surah Ta Ha, 20:134)

The above verse also carries the same idea as conveyed in the previous verse.

A Review of Other Forms of Thinking

Those people who consider themselves unconcerned about the Divine revelations approved of the following types of laws:

(i) The laws made by one single individual, which are based on self-interest, personal aggrandizement, and have every kind of weakness, defect, injustice, foolishness, narrow-mindedness and scattered ideas.

(ii) The unjust laws which are made by a particular class or group of people, e.g. the capitalists or the laborers, to suit their individual requirements.

(iii) The laws which are made by the national assembly no matter whether they happen to be useful or not for the nation. Such types of laws are considered by the people as progressive.

From this we have understood as to who through what source has a right to make laws. We have also known that the lawmaker should possess the following qualifications:

(i) He should have a complete and thorough knowledge of the subject and should be fully aware of man's carnal and spiritual needs and problems.

(ii) He should be compassionate and magnanimous.

(iii) He should be honest and just and should not favor one or the other individual or group of individuals out of expediency.

(iv) He should be an honest judge and should not have in view the expediency or the interest of a particular individual or a group ignoring reality and justice of the cause.

Obviously, such a law-maker can be none except Allah whose messages, instructions and laws reach us through His revelations to the Holy Prophets. Thus the Prophets are the medium of receiving Divine messages, which they transmit to the people.

Why People Obey the Laws?

Every law becomes prevalent in a particular way. We should like to state two such ways:

(i) Ignorance and Stupidity:

People sometimes obey the laws because of their ignorance and stupidity. Allama Iqbal said very aptly: "Man has become a slave of a man like himself because of ignorance. He had within himself the ego of self-respect but he threw that precious pearl under the feet of despots like Qubad and Jamshed. He then after acquiring the slavish mentality became a creature worse than a dog for I have never seen any dog bowing down before another dog".

Islam does not approve of blind following. Many of the Qur'anic verses severely criticized the ways and means of the idolaters, who justified their action on the ground that their ancestors did the same thing. Their only plea was that their elders did the same thing. The Holy Qur'an says:

When (the faithless) commit indecent acts they say, 'We found our ancestors used to do so, and Allah has commanded us to do the same! (Surah al-A'raf, 7:28)

(ii) Fear and Greed:

The tyrants make people obey their laws and unjust commands through threat and intimidation. The Holy Qur'an says:

(Fir'aun) said, 'If you take another god besides me, I will most certainly make you one of the imprisoned. (Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26:29)

The despotic rulers used to attract the people through allurements just as Fir'aun gathered the magicians of his kingdom and promised them a good reward for humiliating Prophet Musa. The Holy Qur'an says:

When the magicians came they asked Fir'aun: 'Will there be any reward for us if we win'. He replied, 'You will be then my closest associates '. (Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26:41-42)

It is obvious that threat and temptation are the two strong means through which people can be made to follow the laws, and these means weaken the faculty of independent and careful action. Islam has declared about the torment of Hell and the reward of Paradise but these are not meant for the present world as the people consider them as a thing of distant future which will happen after their death.

Hence they select their path and obey the order with perfect calmness and peace of mind. There is a great difference between the two persons one of whom has to pay his debt the following day and the other has to do that after a few years. The former becomes restless and worried about his liability while the latter appears to be free from care as if he has no debt at all.

The fear of chastisement or hope of the reward on the Day of Judgement does not compel a man to perform a certain command. This is proved from the fact that despite his being aware of the promises made by Allah, man remains indifferent to his obligations.

(iii) Need and Competition: The third thing which prompts a man to obey laws is his requirements as well as his competition with other people.

(iv) Reason and Intellect: Sometimes reason and intellect play an important part in making the people obey the laws. If for instance, a policeman closes a certain route for the drivers and they know its reason they will obey his order without any grudge, but if they are not told any reason and suspect the policeman's order to be arbitrary they will definitely refuse to follow his instructions.

Islam too adopts the course of reason and intellect for making the people obey its laws. That is why sometimes it says very briefly that we should do a certain thing in order that we may imbibe the spirit of piety. As for example regarding the command of observing fast, the Holy Qur'an says:

Believers, fasting has been made obligatory on you as it was made obligatory on the people before you, so that you may become pious. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:183)

This command in fact is for man's spiritual advantage. Similarly, in this very context the Holy Qur'an says about charity:

The example of those who spend their wealth to please Allah with firm and sincere intention is like the garden on a fertile land which after a heavy rainfall or even a drizzle, it yields its fruits twice as much. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:265)

In many of the traditions of our infallible Holy Imams reasons and arguments for following the commands of Islam have been told, and a number of books have been written on this subject like Ilalush Shariya'. Fortunately in these days of development and progress new realities and the philosophy of commands come to light.

(v) Love and Affection: The fifth reason by which one follows the commands of the other is due to love and regards he has for him even if that attachment of love and regard is false not to speak of the love which is based on knowledge and spiritual enlightenment besides reason. The Holy Qur'an says:

But the love of the faithful for Allah is more intense. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:165)

These are the various ways which cause the people to obey the laws. Needless to emphasize that the best and the most rational way is the fourth and the fifth way which we have elaborated about.

In short, the best way in Islam which we should adopt is the one which is based on knowledge, wisdom, love and affection. The Holy Qur'an says:Call (the pagans) to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good advice, and reason with them in the best possible manner. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:125)

Force should be applied only in the last resort. The Holy Qur'an says:

Quraysh should worship the Lord of this House (Ka'bah), Who provided them with sustenance when they were hungry and gave them security against fear. (Surah Quraysh, 106:3-4)

Feeding and maintenance of peace are the first steps towards worship of Allah. By that means the people would become conscious of Allah's Benevolence and Mercy.

Who is Responsible for the Enforcement of Laws?

We have discussed previously that ignorance, stupidity, threat; temptation, competition etc. are not the real factors which can enforce laws. The best means are to develop one's wisdom, intellect and sense of love and respect for the one who enforces the laws.

Now we deal with the characteristics of those who are responsible for the enforcement of laws:

(i) Intellectual Maturity: No religion other than Islam encourages its followers to acquire knowledge and apply reason. That is why in Islam associating with pious scholars or touring around from country to country and to consult with one another is to broaden one's mental horizon.

In the Holy Qur'an we learn of the past history of the ancient nations, their downfall and the lives of the Prophets and the secret of their success. Ignorance, apathy and obstinacy are found in those people who have given up their power of thinking and faculty of applying their reason. According to the Holy Qur'an, the philosophy of obeying the commands and the

ruination of the past stubborn nations are good lessons for ensuring the enforcement of laws.

(ii) Stirring the Sentiments: To stir up the people the law enforcing authority may take the help of their sentiments. The matter of encouragement has been presented in the Holy Qur'an to the extent that it says to the Holy Prophet in the following verses:

Collect religious tax (Zakat) from them. You would purify and cleanse them thereby and pray for them. Your prayers give them peace. (Surah at-Tawba, 9:103)

Then he is of those who believe and urge upon one another to be patient, and urge upon one another to be kind. (Surah al-Balad, 90:17)

Man is certainly in loss, except those who believe, and do good deeds and enjoin truth on one another and enjoin upon one another to bear with patience. (Surah al-Asr, 103:2-3)

Why do you not fight for the cause of Allah or save the helpless men, women and children who cry out, 'Lord, set us free from this town of wrong doers and send us a guardian and a helper? (Surah an-Nisa, 4:75)

In this verse the Almighty Allah in order to persuade them to take part in jihad has referred to the sad plight of those people and children who have got into the clutches of the tyrants, and has stirred the moral sense of the people.

Yet he has not entered into 'aqaba'. Would that you knew what 'aqaba' is? It is the setting free of a slave or the feeding of an orphan relative and downtrodden destitute person in a day of famine. (Surah al-Balad, 90:13-16)

Thus it should be borne in mind that these revelations had the real aim of rousing the people to action.

(iii) Belief in Allah and the Day of Judgment: The most important and viable factor which plays a vital role in making people abide by the laws is the Belief in Allah and the Day of Judgment. That means the emphasis is on the belief that man is the creature and servant of Allah and as such he has to be obedient to Him as he is under the surveillance of his Creator and being Allah's creature, he will have to return one day to Him and will have to account for his deeds.

This belief also means Allah will compensate him by rewarding him ten times greater than what is due to him against his noble deeds and that He will pardon his shortcomings and errors, and that his deeds and misdeeds even so small as of the size of an atom will be taken into account. Indeed such a perfect faith and belief plays an effective role in obeying the Divine commands.

(iv) Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil: When the people in a certain nation give up doing evil acts, then all the individuals of the society start enjoining good and forbidding evil. When a motor car driver goes to a wrong direction, the drivers of other cars blow the horns and kindle the lights to remind the driver of the traffic rules that he is violating and n1ake the defaulter drive his car in a proper way. By this it is meant that the people can enforce the laws themselves.

(v) Government and Punishment: In the above-mentioned example if the driver does not pay heed to the warning of other drivers, then he will be

prosecuted by police and fined. Of course sometimes punishment and a harsh treatment become necessary. But this is in no way related to the following Quranic verse:

There is no compulsion in religion. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 256)

Because this verse means negation of compulsion in faith and beliefs. It does not mean that we can do whatever we like otherwise hoarders, thieves and usurers can use this verse as an excuse for their misdeeds, and can say that there is no compulsion in religion and so they can do whatever they like.

Signs of the Prophets

There are three ways of recognizing the Prophets:

(i) Miracles: Whenever a man claims that he has a link with the Creator of the Universe Who possesses Infinite Knowledge and Absolute Power, he should perform such deeds and say such things as others cannot do. To prove the truth of his claim he should cause such events to happen as are beyond human power, and this will show that he has his link with the other world. Such deeds are called miracles.

A Question: How do the miracles of the Prophets differ from the skill and feats of the inventors, magicians, devout worshippers, wrestlers, and why are these people not recognized as Prophets?

Answer: The answer to this question is that the feats of these people are the result of their constant practice and exercise of a long period of time just as in the beginning an athlete lifts a small weight that an ordinary man can do but gradually by virtue of regular practice and exercise he is able to lift a heavy weight of a dumbbell which can only be lifted by several men combined.

But in the case of Prophet Saleh when the people asked him to perform a miracle by bringing a she-camel of a particular characteristic out of a mountain, he did not tell them to wait until he could practice performing that sort of deed because such extraordinary supernatural feats cannot be done even after lifelong efforts and practice.

(ii) Divine Guidance: The ways and manners of the Prophets are the result of Divine teachings and guidance. Every devotee or inventor is dependent on the guidance of a teacher or a helper but Prophets do not need any such teacher or guide.

(iii) Supernatural Powers: An expert or genius specializes in one or the other branches of science and his work is dependent upon some restricted possibilities. On the other hand the Prophets perform all kinds of supernatural acts as they derive their strength and power from Divine sources and the Divine Power is not limited so as to show one or two miracles only.

(iv) Purpose: The main objective of the experts in various fields is to entertain or please the people by their feats but the miracles of the Prophets aim at elevating the mankind making the society an excellent model, and guiding the people towards the real Power (Allah).

(v) Infallibility: The experts are apt to fall in error but the Prophets are infallible and we never find any flaw in their character. We shall deal with this topic in detail afterwards.

(vi) Miracles are Unmatchable: Magicians and other skilled persons know that their feats can be performed or repeated by others like them but the Prophets know that their miracles are performed by them owing to Divine Power and as such they openly declare and challenge that nobody can match them in such miracles.

However, there are many other differences between the Prophets' miracles and the mesmerizing skill of magicians and other such enchanters from the point of view of the nature of performance, the object of performing as well as the personality of the performer. If we ponder over this matter we will at once distinguish the Prophets from these tricksters.

Miracle is Not a Joke: The answer to the question whether the Prophets performed a certain type of miracle according to the wishes of the people is certainly a blunder. It is because in the Qur'anic verses we learn that sometimes the people expected the performance of impossible, irrelevant or damaging things from the Holy Prophets, who never paid any attention to it. We give below some examples of their irrational demands

Or bring Allah and the angels face to face with us. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17: 92)

Here since Allah does not possess any form, this demand could not be fulfilled.

Or cause the sky to fall into pieces on us. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:92)

Or show us that you have a well-adorned house of gold.(Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:93)

Or show us that you have your own garden of palm trees and vines. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:91)

Is being the owner of a garden of vines or the house of gold the proof of having link with Allah? Were Firaun, Namrud and Qarun who possessed abundant wealth and property nearer to Allah? Were the Prophets showmen who organized public entertainments and gave demonstration of their miracles to fulfill the wishes of the people? Was the showing of miracles not meant to prove only Prophethood?(See Sermon 197, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

If a constructor builds a few houses or a script writer inscribes a few pages in order to prove his skill in construction or penmanship, is it not enough to prove his skill? Should he build the houses for everybody or write for everybody?

Apart from all these, did these people not say after witnessing the miracle performed by the Prophets that they had performed magic only? Thus, if someone is not prepared to accept truth at any cost, he will not do it despite hundreds of proofs and signs?

Are not all cells particles, leaves of trees not sufficient to prove the existence of Allah? But there is no remedy for those who stubbornly refuse to accept truth. So the purpose behind the miracles is to show the link of the Prophets with Allah to the pious and clean hearted people. However, it is not necessary that the Prophets should show their miracles every day, every hour, and in all matters according to the wishes of the people.

We see ourselves that the lives of the Prophets were full of trials and tribulations and they surmounted all their troubles with perseverance and

forbearance but they never used miracles as a means of removing the difficulties that they and their followers suffered.

The Philosophy of Miracles

Normally if a miracle is to be performed to a certain group of people such as carpenters, tailors, gold smiths etc. it should be concerned with their own field of interest. Thus in the times of Prophet Musa since witchcraft was at its height, there was the miracle of his staff as it turned into a serpent after being thrown on the ground.

Similarly in the days of Prophet Isa people were much interested in the science of medicine and treatment of diseases. Thus, the miracle of Prophet Isa was that by Divine Will he used to bring the dead back to life.

In the same way in the times of our Holy Prophet rhetorical language and eloquence were considered to be the mark of distinction and therefore one of the miracles of the Holy Prophet was the Holy Qur'an the like of which could not and cannot be produced by human skill. Thus the Holy Qur'an is the long lasting miracle of the Holy Prophet.

Salient Features of the Holy Qur'an

We have said before that for a Prophet it is necessary that he should perform one miracle or the other so as to establish the fact before the people that he possesses some supernatural power and further that the miracle should be of the kind which should be relevant to the interest of the people of the time. We now deal with some characteristic features of the miracles of the Holy Prophet of Islam:

(a) The Holy Qur'an is the greatest miracle of the Holy Prophet and it is always present in the hands of the people. On the contrary the staff of Prophet Musa or the restoring the dead to life by Prophet Isa cannot be witnessed by the people of other places or ages.

(b) The components of the miracle of the Holy Qur'an are those words by the help of which all people converse daily.

(c) The Holy Qur'an is the miracle as well as the guidance of Allah while the miracles of other Prophets were not like that.

(d) The miracles of other Prophets were miracles in one way while the Holy Qur'an according to Allama Majlisi is a miracle in fifteen ways and according to Allama Tabatabai in eleven ways and it is just possible that in future some more aspects may be discovered about it as for instance some interpretations of al-Huruful Muqatta'at (the abbreviated forms) used in the Holy Qur'an have been made.

In this sacred Divine Book there are 114 chapters (Surahs), more than 6000 verses and 78000 words. The Almighty Allah in His book has warned the disbelievers against obstinacy, destructive activities, improper use of wealth, fighting, making the children orphans, spreading rumors, intimidating, and slandering etc. He has challenged them to produce a Book like the Holy Qur'an. He says:

Say, if the whole mankind and jinn were to come together to bring the equivalent of this Qur'an, they could not do so, even if they all were to help each other. (Surah Bani Israil, 17:88)

Do the unbelievers say that Muhammad has falsely ascribed the Qur'an to Allah? Ask them, 'Compose ten chapters like those of the Qur'an and call on whomever you can for help besides Allah if you are true in your claim. (Surah Hud, 11:13)

Do they say that Muhammad has invented it? (Muhammad) tell them, 'If your claim is true, compose only one chapter like it and call on anyone besides Allah for help. (Surah Yunus, 12:38)

Do they say, 'He has falsely invented it? In fact they themselves have no faith. Let them produce a discourse like it if they are true in their claim. (Surah at-Tur, 52:3)

If you look at these four verses of the Holy Qur an that have been quoted above and ponder over them a little, you will note that Allah has many times challenged the unbelievers to produce something like the Holy Qur'an.

In the beginning the Prophet of Islam challenges the unbelievers to produce ten chapters like those of the Holy Qur an.

Then, they have been asked to produce even one single chapter like that of the Holy Qur'an.

At last the Prophet of Islam challenges the unbelievers that it is not necessary that they produce one single chapter like that of the Holy Qur'an but let them bring one single discourse like that of the Holy Qur'an.

The Unbeaten Challenge for 14 Centuries

Despite the open challenge thrown out to the enemies of Islam nobody has as yet come forward to accept it. Arabic is not our mother tongue and we cannot therefore produce anything like the Holy Qur'an, but why are those people whose mother tongue is Arabic keeping mum? We are the followers of Islam but why do the enemies of Islam not come forward?

Still today there are many Arabic speaking people who have socialist and anti-Islamic views in Arab and non-Arab countries and they spend huge sums of money in the budget of their countries for the propagation of their ideologies and in conspiring against the noble ideals of Islam and these very people can at last gather funds to convene Seminar in which all their brains trust and intellectual giants can take part in producing something like the Holy Qur'an but they are unable to do that.

Imam Ali is reputed to be the most eloquent personality whose eloquence in Arabic language is second to none and who right from the tender age of 10 years was acquainted with the Holy Qur'an with unabated enthusiasm, zeal and vigor, whenever in his sermons in Nahjul Balaghah even a small verse of the Holy Qur'an is quoted it becomes singularly unique in its merit and overshadows everything.

Even in the traditions of the Holy Prophet the quotations from the Holy Qur'an become singularly unique as compared to the saying of the Holy Prophet. This is the beauty of the eloquence of the verses of the Holy Qur'an that the words and phrases are the same as spoken by others who have the mastery over the language and yet the blending of its words and phrases is such that it is beyond the power of any human being to produce its equal even after fourteen hundred years.

Apart from that another astonishing thing is that the Holy Qur'an was given by an unlettered man, and the more the scientific knowledge is

advancing day by day the more are the merits of the Qur'an being discovered. It is in itself an everlasting miracle.

Wherever there appears to be some difference between Divine revelations and the human knowledge the actual position is that knowledge is not real knowledge but it is a theory or an ideology and has no connection with revelation, because a true knowledge is never opposed to the Divine revelation.

There are verses in the Holy Qur'an which at the time of their revelation were prophecies and predicted the future events and it was not long time that they proved to be true.

At the time when some people were thinking that since the Prophet of Islam had no son of his own Islam would be outdated after his passing away and he would only be remembered by the name of his son who had expired during his lifetime. At this the following verse of Holy Qur'an was revealed.

Muhammad, We have granted you abundant virtue. So worship your Lord and make sacrificial offerings. Whoever hates you will himself remain childless. (Surah al-Kauthar, 108:1-3)

That is in this surah, Almighty Allah assured His beloved Prophet that He had been bestowed infinite bounties that is his Holy Progeny will expand from his most beloved and exalted and infallible daughter, Lady Fatimatuz Zahra while his enemies would perish despite their living sons. Everybody then saw that this Qur'anic verse proved to be hundred percent true.

We shall help you against those who mock you. (Surah Hijr, 15:95)

The above verse meant that Allah would defeat all conspiracies and intrigues and destroy the scoffers. We see that the Holy Prophet came out of all these conspiracies and mockeries successfully and how his teachings and guidance changed the destinies of mankind and people swarmed round him.

Could anybody believe that after the terrible defeat of the Romans they would again become victorious. The Qur'anic verse was revealed saying that within a period of ten years the Romans' defeat would turn into a victory. The Holy Qur'an says:

The Romans have been defeated in a nearby land and after this defeat, (within a few years) they will be victorious.(Surah ar-Rum, 30:2-4)

These verses were prophecies at the time of their revelation and were signs of the miraculous Holy Qur'an. Its details are found in all authentic books.

There is another noteworthy thing. When a man begins some work he has a little knowledge and experience about it and gradually these increase and he becomes perfect in his work. But in the case of the Qur'anic revelations such a thing is not there.

That is the Qur'anic verses which were revealed in the early period of Prophethood when the Holy Prophet was of 40 years of age do not differ in meaning and purpose with those which were revealed at a later period when the Holy Prophet was of 63 years of age. All the verses are of the same tempo and style and not that some improvement was made in them gradually. All these features are the proof of the Holy Qur'an being a miracle. The Holy Qur'an says:

Had it come from someone except Allah, they would have found therein many contradictions. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:82)

The mental condition of man in general does not always remain the same in war and peace, in poverty and affluence, in honor and disgrace, in the beginning and the end of a work, etc. but the meanings of the Holy Qur'an always remain the same and there is no contradiction or discrepancy in them and that is the proof of the fact that the Holy Qur'an is a Book of Allah and not a creation of human mind.

Since it was our intention to give a brief account of the signs of the Prophets, we have avoided to dwell upon the miracles of the Holy Qur'an from the scholarly point of view. There have been startling revelations made in this Book on such subjects as the earth's rotation, earth's gravitational force, earth's spherical nature, blowing of winds and formation of clouds, movements of planets in fixed orbits, life and vegetation in other planets which human mind could not have been able to conceive for fourteen hundred years up to the last four centuries.

We have also not dealt with them because a number of books have been written and research work has been done on them, nor have tried to answer some of the questions which have been raised as for example the doubt in regard to alteration in the Holy Qur'an about which the Holy Qur'an itself has answered in several of its verses. We simply quote two of such verses:

We have revealed the Qur'an and We are its Protector.(Surah al-Hijr, 15:9)

Falsehood cannot reach it from any direction. (Surah Ha Mim Sajdah, 41:42)

On the strength of clear-cut statements in the Holy Qur'an we do not give any cognizance to unreliable and unauthentic narrations regarding the alteration of the Holy Qur'an because according to our school of thought anything which is against the version of the Holy Qur'an should be rejected outright, for it comes from ignorant friends or wise enemies who have falsely ascribed them to the Holy Imams.

Apart from that when we refer to certain narrations regarding the alteration in the Holy Qur'an we find that these narrations pertain to the difference in the recitation or to the background of the revelation of the Qur'anic verses or to those explanations and elaborations which our infallible Imams have derived from them but they do not relate to the question of the alteration in the Holy Qur'an.

Towards Understanding the Holy Qur'an

Contrary to the opinion of the people who consider the Holy Qur'an to be confined to worship, prayers, and morals, we should point out that one-twelfth part of it, (about 500 verses) relates to problems of jurisprudence, while the larger part of it deals with matters pertaining to social, political, administrative, historical, and cultural, faith and other matters.

In no other book you will find so much stress being laid on defending our rights, fighting against social evils, and bringing about peace and tranquility in the society.

The Holy Qur'an is a Book, which has laid down the code of instructions for the guidance of mankind in its most lucid style and has depicted the life

of the Prophet of Islam, Prophet Ibrahim, and Asiya, wife of Firaun, as models to follow.

The Messenger of Allah is certainly the best example for those who have hope in Allah and in the Day of Judgment and who always remember Allah. (Surah Ahzab, 33:21)

O Prophet Ibrahim and those with him are the best examples for you to follow. (Surah al-Muntahanah, 60:4)

The Holy Qur'an is not the Book like any other book in the sense that it does not concern only with the mind but it is a code of moral values also. The narrations mentioned in it are not meant for pastime but are for taking lessons from them. Its historical account of the past nations is not just a history but it envisages the philosophy of the rise and fall of nations.

The Holy Qur'an is a Book which in its place is simple and easy-to-understand on the one hand and forceful and effective on the other. The Holy Qur'an is a guide which makes man reach from dust to Allah, and elevates him from corporal to spiritual heights.

The Holy Qur'an is a Book which by cogent reasoning bestows insight upon man. It shows the right path to man by giving the accounts of the Prophets and the nations and motivates him through parables, exhortations and admonitions.

This Book also deals with the middle course between man and Allah through worship as well as different aspects of relation between man and the created beings, charity, sacrifice, and mutual cooperation.

It also shows the mutual relationship between man and nature, that is, how man conquers nature, how natural principles are kept alive, how natural tendencies are developed, how best they can be utilized, and how further researches can be continued, so that all the phenomena may be proved to be the signs of Allah and His Might.

This Book also speaks of the dealings of men with the opponents and the hypocrites. It deals with the invitation to the right path, wisdom, preaching, and reasonable arguments.

It shows how to get rid of the destructive elements including those who are stumbling-blocks in the way of acceptance of truth. It also tells us of the hard fight against the rebels and hypocrites and its reactions, and above all of the fifth columnist activities.

In the Holy Qur'an, the importance of acquiring of knowledge, character building, social structure, qualities of the guardian, code of conduct, the way of teaching and many other problems have been dealt with for instance.

- What should we learn?
- From where should we learn?
- For what should we learn?

In this Divine Book many subjects such as moral code and behavior, campaign against superstitious ideas, social, political and economical problems, military pacts, rights of family members, husbands and wives, parents and children, respect of parents etc. have been elaborately discussed.

It contains clear-cut commands about taking punitive actions against criminals and those evil-doers, who disrupt the society's peace, who create

dissension among the people, who play with the life and honor of the people, and who usurp the people's properties.

The Divine Book creates such a confidence and insight in good and noble people that they feel themselves always under the benign protection of the All-Powerful, All-Knowing Allah. But these days owing to our callous indifference the position of this Holy Book has reached the extent that it is merely remembered on ceremonial occasions only as its verses are recited at inaugural ceremonies or used in calligraphic art, in architectural designs, on tombstones and domes.

Sometime the Holy Book is presented to the bride as a sign of good omen to become an essential item of her dowry. We borrowed our system of working from our colonial masters and as such we have fallen into a ditch of moral degradation and disgrace. If our young man had learnt in his school the following Qur'anic verse, the colonial powers would not have subjugated us.

If in the morning parade of armed forces the following Qur'anic verses were to be recited as a morning prayer, the Muslim armies would never have been left to the tender mercies of the colonial powers for centuries:

Believers, do not consider the Jews and Christians as your allies. They are allies of one another. (Surah al-Maidah, 5:51)

Believers do not expose your privacy to the unbelievers.(Surah Ale Imran, 3:118)

If the following Divine Commandment against usury is enforced all centres of interest would have been closed down:

Those who take unlawful interest will stand before Allah (on the Doomsday) as those who suffer from a mental imbalance because of Satan's touch. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:275)

If the following Qur'anic verse had been acted upon, all the Muslim countries would have strengthened their military power to defeat their enemies and the Islamic world which constitutes one-third of the world's population would have attained its lost glory and honor:

If one party rebels against the other, fight against the rebellious one until he surrenders to the Command of Allah.(Surah al-Hujurat, 49:9)

If all the Muslims of the whole world had paid heed to the following Qur'anic verse:

They disobeyed their Messenger and followed the orders of every transgressing tyrant. (Surah Hud, 11:59)

They could have removed with their own hands those tyrants whom the colonial powers thrusted on them, and would have welcomed the Qur'anic verses which exhort us not to obey the following persons:

The evil-doers (Surah al-A'raf, 7:142)

The transgressors (Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26:151)

The sinful or disbelieving person (Surah ad-Dahr, 76:24)

The ignorant (Surah al-Jashiya, 45:18) and

The mean swearer (Surah al-Qalam, 68:10)

Unfortunately, the Muslims did not respond to the true spirit of the Holy Qur'an and from Prophet Ibrahim up to the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali the invitation to the right path has been ignored and their

commands have not been followed by us in right earnest and as a consequence of that we have been passing a life of disgrace by supporting the tyrants and we lagged behind even in material and spiritual advancement and made ourselves undeserving of the Divine Justice, and above all on the Day of Judgment the Holy Prophet will protest in a complaint against us as per the Qur'anic verse:

Lord, my people had abandoned this Qur'an. (Surah Furqan, 25:30)

At this moment we seize this opportunity to refer to Imam Ali who said: "The Holy Qur'an is the safest refuge from sin and vice. It is the harbinger of peace for mankind. It honors those who accept it, guides those who follow it, protects those who act according to its dictates and it acts as a sound argument for those who speak through it.

It testifies those who claim its testimony. It supports those who support it. It brings success to those who embrace it. It is the quickest and the shortest way to salvation for those who formulate their lives according to its tenets". (Sermon 203, p. 485, Peak of Eloquence)

At another place the Holy Imam says. "Fear Allah as far as the Holy Qur'an is concerned lest non-Muslims should surpass you in following its teachings". And actually it did happen.

It is this very Holy Qur'an which exhorts the Muslims to take stock of the world happenings, to travel around the world and to see things for themselves, to take lessons from the events of the past and to exchange views with people of other nations and to find out ways and means for solving the social and individual problems.

We have however seen how the Muslims because of their ignoring the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, deprived themselves of so many benefits, while others went forward winning in the race for advancement. They visited the Muslim countries and examined the causes of the weaknesses and strengths of the Muslim nations and thus became conversant with all the natural resources.

They discovered our mineral wealth and sold them out to us. This is the sort of punishment for us who have forsaken the Holy Book, ignored the teachings of our infallible Imams and became ungrateful to them.

Prophet Musa liberated his people (Bani Isra'il) from the serfdom of Fir'aun and appointed his brother, Prophet Harun in his place, during his absence, as a guide, but the people of Bani Isra'il turned ungrateful and deviated from the path of Allah that Prophet Musa had shown them and started worshipping the calf of Samri again.

When Prophet Musa returned he became much perturbed after having seen his people going back to their original creed of polytheism and became annoyed with his brother, Prophet Harun who could not do much about it than said: "O my Brother! This nation did not accept my authority.

They were slaves the other day, but today they have become arrogant after attaining freedom, and not only did they disobey me, but they were about to kill me also. They gave up their stand and adopted the ways of recklessness and revelries instead of faith, fraternity, mutual cooperation and guidance".

Since these are the factors which rob the nations of their freedom and plunge them into alien domination, we should be aware of the colonial intentions and arm ourselves with faith, fraternity and discipline.

The Holy Qur'an narrates this incident with the purpose of giving us a warning that if we adopt the ways of the people of Bani Isra'il, we too would go astray. Thus all sensible people should take lessons from such happenings, as faced by the people of Prophet Musa. What we have said is not even a fraction of what the Holy Qur'an has said.

To be brief, we will remain content with giving whatever appreciation of the Holy Qur an that we could possibly do to give an inexhaustible account of the Holy Qur'an in a few pages of this book. The Holy Qur'an is undoubtedly the word of Allah and He has referred this Holy Book as:

• The Light (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:15)
• The Healer (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:82)
• The Clear Proof (Surah al-An'am, 6:104)
• The Guide (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:2)
• The Criterion (Surah al-Furqan, 25:1)
• The Truth (Surah Fatir, 35:31)
• The Reminder (Surah Ta Ha, 20:3)

Therefore, with these few lines we conclude this topic (the Holy Qur'an) and give below certain rules that the Holy Qur'an itself has made for its recitation.

Rules for Recitation of the Holy Qur'an

(i) According to the Holy Qur'an only the purified ones shall touch it:

None shall touch it save the purified ones. (Surah al-Waqi'a, 56:79)

Hence, one should perform ablution before the recitation of this Divine Book.

(ii) Before reciting the Holy Qur'an we should invoke Allah's protection from the mischief of the Satan, Satan's diabolic whisperings, devilish activities and dispositions which prevent man to fill his soul with the impact of the Holy Qur'an:

When you recite the Qur'an, seek refuge in Allah from the mischiefs of Satan. (Surah al-Nahl, 16:98)

(iii) While reciting the Holy Qur'an, we should think as if Allah is directly addressing Himself to us. But it should not be so for memorizing it or quoting it in our speeches to arouse passion.

(iv) We should recite the Holy Qur'an in a way as it ought to be recited that is with clear pronunciation of words, in distinct manner, in good voice, with proper care of pauses and not in a hurriedly and unintelligible manner. As the Holy Qur'an says:

Recite the Qur'an distinctly. (Surah Muzzammil, 73 4)

(v) After reciting the Holy Qur'an one should ponder over the meaning also as the Holy Qur'an has objected to those who recite it as a formality just by hurriedly moving their lips without knowing the meaning. The Holy Qur'an says:

Do they not ponder over the Qur'an? (Surah an-Nisa, 4:82)

(vi) While reciting the Holy Qur'an, we should bear in mind the narrations of our infallible Imams about relevant verses of the Holy Qur'an

as well as the background of the revelation of those particular verses as to the specific occasions so that we are not distracted from its true meaning and we do not deviate from our basic faith. We should not derive the incorrect meaning of the verse howsoever conservative or progressive it may be in outlook .

Reverting to Main Discussion: Our discussion was about the method of recognizing the signs of Prophethood and we have elaborately discussed the first method which was by means of the miracles of the Holy Prophets. Now we deal with second and third methods one by one.

The Second Method:

We can recognize the Prophets by their life, sayings, miracles and approaches. In this regard, we give an example:

When the two parties quarrel, the police takes them away to lock up and start questioning them in detail as an investigation and ask them:

1. Who are you?
2. Where did the quarrel take place?
3. When did the quarrel happen?
4. What happened then?
5. What did you say?
6. What did you do?

The investigator after making thorough inquiries knows the real facts.

Similarly we can recognize our Holy Prophet from the following inquiries:

1. Who was he?
2. Where did he live?
3. What sort of people visited him?
4. Who were the parties which opposed him?
5. How did he prove his point of view?
6. What was the basic thing he said?
7. Who were the people whom he trained?

The life history of our Holy Prophet appropriately answers the above-mentioned questions:

1. He was unlettered and trustworthy.

2. He was in the midst of the society which was the seat of idolatry, polytheism and dissension and where under the unfavorable and hostile atmosphere of illiteracy, superstitions and savagery he started his mission of inviting people to Allah.

3. He had with him such people as Lady Khadija, his beloved wife and Ali Ibn Abi Talib, his cousin brother, the two being the model of piety and devotion and who before the advent of Islam possessed high qualities of mind and soul.

4. His opponents were powerful, selfish, cruel and haughty.

5. He never deviated from his mission and remained steadfast despite tortures and deceit of the people. He carried out his mission with undaunted courage. He never promised for worldly things to the people in support of his message. Nor did he make any false claims.

6. He proved his point in the light of Divine revelations and preached the Divine commands as revealed by the Holy Qur'an.

7. He trained men like Salman, Abuzar and Miqdad to carry on his message.

Indeed, even if the Holy Prophet had not been endowed with miracles, his life, achievements and sincerity of purpose would have been enough to testify his truthfulness and the righteous cause he stood for.

The Third Method:

We can accept the sayings of the earlier Prophets as the third method of the recognition of the Holy Prophets. We can cite an example as follows:

Suppose I come to your house and claim that your house is actually my house and I am its owner and that the documents mention my name as the owner. The natural course against such a claim should be that you should take out the document and show to the people that nowhere in that document any claim is proved.

If on the contrary you become excited, start quarrelling with me, spend money and are not prepared to disprove the claim of my ownership; what decision would the people give in this case? Is your failing to give the proof and quarrelling and suffering not the proof of my claim?

The Holy Prophet came and he claimed that he was the same Prophet whose name was mentioned in Taurat and Injil. The Jews fought the battles and the Christians sustained losses. If this thing had not been mentioned in Taurat and Injil, they would have defamed the Holy Prophet by claiming that his name was not mentioned in their Scriptures.

But the enemies of Islam fought the battles against Islam and sustained heavy losses which proved that the name of Prophet of Islam was mentioned in the Scriptures but those people expunged that portion of the text from the Scriptures which contained the name of the Prophet of Islam.

Attributes of the Prophets and the Life of the Last Prophet

We will discuss briefly the qualities and the attributes of the Prophets with special reference to the life of the Holy Prophet of Islam for these have a direct bearing on our basic faith as well as on our moral conduct, deeds and general behavior.

The thing that influences man's progress and training is knowledge of history and its philosophical approach. What would be better than that we become acquainted with those who are history's most successful and infallible personages.

The knowledge of history and the life and characteristic attributes of the Holy Prophets not only leave a good effect on us but it also has a similar effects on the Prophets; because we find that whenever the Holy Prophet was confronted with some serious difficulties by way of people's oppositions, intrigues, threats and intimidations, the Almighty Allah narrated to him the similar circumstances which the earlier Prophets had passed through in their lifetime so as to console him in his anxieties.

When the Holy Prophet happened to be surrounded by the scoffers, the following verse was revealed:

They mocked the Messengers who were sent before you; thus the torment which they had ridiculed encompassed them all. (Surah Anbiya, 21:41)

This verse indicates that the Holy Prophet too should remain steadfast like his predecessors.

Furthermore against the hardships that the Holy Prophet suffered at the hands of the infidels of Makkah, the Almighty Allah revealed the following verse:

We shall exercise patience against the troubles with which you afflict us. (Surah Ibrahim, 14:12)

In short by knowing the life history of the Prophets and their attributes we are to be greatly benefited. Now we deal with this subject in some detail.

Social Life of the Prophets

Since the best way of preaching is through action the Prophets should share the hardships and the difficulties with the people so as to set a practical example before them. That is why the Holy Prophets led a simple life like other people and shared all their difficulties. Like other people they also underwent troubles.

They would also experience captivity at the hands of their enemies, the agony as a result of the disobedience of their sons, opposition from the side of their wives, illness, penury, scoffing, taunts and several other unpleasant things. In this connection we quote below some relevant Qur'anic verses:

We sent the Messengers before you (Muhammad) and gave them wives and offspring (Surah Ra'd, 13:38)

All Messengers whom We sent before, certainly ate food and walked through the streets. (Surah Furqan, 25:20)

We sent Nuh to his people who said, 'My people worship Allah for He is your only Lord. Will you then not have fear of Him'. The chiefs of the unbelievers said to the others, he is a mere mortal like you. (Surah Mu'minun, 23:23-24)

He is a mere mortal like you. He eats and drinks as you do.(Surah Mu'minun, 23:33)

We read in the life history of the Holy Prophet that whenever he sat amongst his companions he made the sitting arrangement in a circular order so as not to make anyone occupy a seat of distinction.

And his way of sitting, putting on clothes and behavior was such that whenever a visitor happened to visit him in the Masjid he would glance over everybody sitting there but would not know who amongst them was the Holy Prophet. This was the life of a true leader of the Islamic State.

From the point of view of vocational occupation most of the Prophets used to possess cattle, plough the fields and tend the sheep. Whenever the Holy Prophet was on a journey he would take for himself the job of collecting the fire woods for cooking meals.

Not only the Prophets but their loyal followers and disciples also used to follow their footsteps in these matters. When Imam Sajjad proceeded to perform Hajj he settled with the chief of the caravan of pilgrims that he would willingly take upon himself the task of doing their work himself.

Similarly once a man comes to a public bath and sees Imam Ali Riza there, but he does not recognize him. He then asks the Holy Imam to scrub his back and shoulders before his taking the bath and the Holy Imam willingly accepts to do that job. But when the man knows that he is Imam

Riza he becomes extremely sorry and offers apologies to the Holy Imam. But the Holy Imam says that he would not stop until he finishes the job of scrubbing his body.

Imam Ali says: "Whenever in the battlefield we faced difficulties the Holy Prophet used to become our shelter".

Imam Ali often assisted Lady Fatimatuz Zahra, his worthy wife, in her household work.

This in brief is our mode of thinking and conduct of life, and this is how our Holy Imams behaved. We are proud to put these examples to the world at large so that those, who are posing as the champions of equality, justice and moral values, may know that they have not given a new gift to the people nor can they produce a worthy example of their leaders to follow.

Cautioning the Prophets

If the Prophets had so much love for Allah and they were so close to Allah they were also not spared of Allah's cautioning so much so that if even for a single moment they had deviated from the Will and command of Allah, afflictions would befall them. We quote a few Qur'anic verses as follows:

It has been revealed to you and to those who lived before you that if you consider other things equal to Allah, your deeds will be made devoid of all virtue and you will certainly be lost. (Surah az-Zumar, 39:65)

O Messenger! Preach what is revealed to you from your Lord. If you will not preach, it would be as though you have not conveyed the message. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:67)

O Had he (Muhammad) invented some words against Us, We would have caught hold of him by his right hand and cut-off his main artery. (Surah al-Haqqah, 69:44-46)

There are many such verses in the Holy Qur'an which admonish the Prophets, and on some occasions their tone is very severe so as to prevent them from erring.

Conduct of the Prophets

When Allah told Prophet Musa that he was His Prophet and the leader of his people, the first thing he desired from Allah was that he should be endowed with a generous heart, high-spirited soul, patience, steadfastness and courage. The Holy Qur'an says:

O He said, 'O my Lord! Enlarge my breast, and make my mission easy. (Surah Ta Ha, 20:25)

What strength is that which can withstand scoffing, taunts, disgrace, subversion and unreasonable demands without the gift of courage and Divine Help bestowed by Allah? Yes, the only thing which can withstand the burden of all these hardships is patience. Allah says:

No Messenger came to them at whom they did not scoff.(Surah Hijr, 15:11)

O Similarly no Messenger came to those before them but they said: 'He is a sorcerer or a mad man'. (Surah Zariyat, 51:52)

But as to our most exalted of the Prophets, the Holy Prophet of Islam the pagans called him by various names such as poet, or sorcerer, but according

to the Holy Qur'an as he was the model of high morals, compassion and mercy he bore all these things with patience and perseverance, for had it not been so, the very mission of his Prophethood would have not been brought to a successful completion. The Holy Qur'an says:

O Only through Divine Mercy have you (Muhammad) been able to deal with your followers so gently. If you had been stern and hard-hearted they would all have deserted you a long time ago. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:159)

Whenever any of the wives of the Holy Prophet misbehaved towards him, his companions would suggest her being turned out of the house, but he would say that he ignored the shortcomings of his wives after taking into account their good qualities also.

The Holy Prophet used to pray for the salvation of his people. He used to consult the people on certain matters, too. He treated them with compassion and he used to care for giving them proper guidance and training. The Holy Qur'an says:

We have not sent the Qur'an on you so that you should be burdened, but it is an admonition for him who fears. (Surah Ta Ha, 20: 2)

Perhaps you will grieve to death if they disbelieve this Book! (Sura al-Kahf, 18:6)

As knowledge increases the importance of its value is also increased. The Holy Prophet was above all social and family prejudices as he only acknowledged reality and he made no distinction between the poor and the rich; also he was not daunted by fear and intimidation.

The Holy Prophet was sometimes found worshipping Allah in the Cave of Hira; inviting people to Allah on the top of Mount of Safa; drawing his sword against the enemies; carrying bricks and mortar for building the Masjid at Quba. At long last he conquered the city of Makkah.

But all these multifarious activities of the Holy Prophet did not bring about any change in his mode of thinking, doing, and saying. He was always guided by the realities which he had himself discovered within himself and thus devoted himself to his dedicated mission.

Selfless Devotion:

One of the attributes of the Prophets is their selfless devotion to the cause of Divine mission. These chosen servants of Allah did not pin their hope on anybody except Allah. In the 26th Surah (ash-Shura) from verses 109 to 180 of the Holy Qur'an a gist of the messages of Prophets Nuh, Hud, Salih, Lut and Shu'ayb is given that all of them said one and the same thing that their reward was only in the Hands of Allah.

The Holy Prophet also would always declare that he would not expect any return from his followers except that they should follow the path of Allah. This is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an as follows:

Tell them, 'I ask no recompense for preaching to you, except that whoever wants should choose the way of Allah'. (Surah Furqan, 25:57)

This is the kind of recompense which benefits the people themselves and not their benefactor. It is like a teacher who tells his pupils that his recompense lies in their memorizing the lessons or each one of them should collect firewood for the fireplace so as to warm the class room. Here again

this kind of recompense benefits the pupils themselves in return. But when the Holy Qur'an says:

(Muhammad), say, 'I do not ask you for any payment for my preaching to you except the love of my kindred (Surah ash-Shura, 42:23)

It means that the love of the infallible leaders is the guarantee for keeping oneself on the path of Allah and His chosen Prophets.

Here again when we see that the recompense of the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet is linked with the love of the Holy descendants of the Holy Prophet it is also linked with the following of the path of Allah.

This means that the path of the infallible Imams is not different from the path of Allah and both are linked together as the Book of Allah and the Holy Progeny of the Holy Prophet are inseparable from each other.

In short, the Prophets never demanded anything from their people in return for their accepting and following their (the Prophets') message. The Holy Qur'an says:

Say, whatever reward I ask you (for my preaching) will be for your own good. No one can reward me except Allah.(Surah Saba, 34 47)

As we read in history the Prophets not only did not expect anything of material benefit from their people but they also did not promise their people any such material gains.

Some people came to the Holy Prophet and said to him: "If we accept you as Prophet of Allah and profess Islam, would you then give your status and authority to us after you?"

The Holy Prophet replied: "We talk about Prophethood and the worship of Allah which concerns only Allah and not me".

According to Imam Ali they are different people who want to allocate the share of the milk and who consider appointments, dismissals, sharing of profits as the main purpose of worldly gains and to rule over the people by force.

But it is only the personality of the Holy Prophet who against all the promises of worldly gains says to the infidels: "By Allah! Even if you place the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left hand or make me the master of the entire Universe, I shall never deviate from my path". (Sirah Ibn Hisham, vol. I, p. 265)

In fact, speaking things in such clear-cut words is the special trait of the Prophets.

Infallibility

One of the special characteristics and personal distinctions of the Holy Prophets is their infallibility. This attribute of "Infallibility" is that quality by which man by virtue of his belief, knowledge and faith reaches such an exalted height of human perfection that with full freedom he keeps aloof from every sin, so much so that he does not even think of committing any sin.

Some people wonder that a man may not even conceive at committing any sin. We can very easily solve this problem. The explanation is that even like an ordinary man you yourself are immune from committing any error or sin that is you have not thought of committing them either. If you do not agree to this, then you should answer the following question:

(i) Have you ever gone before the people completely nude?

(ii) Have you ever set yourself on fire?

(iii) Have you ever thrown yourself down from the top of a tower?

(iv) Have you ever killed a person who was a worshipper of Allah?

The answers to all these questions will be in the negative. It is because we have already presupposed the dangerous consequences of these actions and have made ourselves certain about that in our mind as well as in our heart and we have actually convinced ourselves about it.

Hence, if we really know from the depth of our heart that the backbiting that we are doing today will assume such a horrible form on the Day of Judgment, we will never think of backbiting. The only fault with us is that our knowledge does not go deep down to our heart and though we are mentally aware of it yet we are not certain about it. That is why knowing that doing a certain thing is bad, we do it.

Let us consider the following example:

We know that a dead body cannot bite us nor can it move its limbs but still we are frightened to pass the night beside it in the same room where it is lying, knowledge has not reached our heart. Our knowledge has not as yet reached a state of certainty. But on the contrary we note that the person, whose profession is to bathe the dead bodies would pass his night with that dead body without any fear or fright.

Here lies the difference. We only know but we are not sure but the other person knows as well as believes that the dead person cannot do any harm to anybody.

From this example, it is proved that the reason why we can protect ourselves from committing any sin is our faith, perfect knowledge and conviction.

Signs of Conviction

Once the Holy Prophet after the morning prayers attended the people, he saw a young man in a sad plight. He was pale, his eyes sunk in their sockets, and hair disheveled. The Holy Prophet enquired of him about his condition. The man replied: "At this moment when I am before you, I am in a state of conviction".

The Holy Prophet became surprised with this remark as the young man had not said that he had knowledge or that he knew, but had said that he had conviction. The Holy Prophet asked the young man the sign of his conviction.

He said: "I have become sure of the Day of Judgment to that extent that it has robbed me of my sleep and I visualize Hell with its blazing fire on one side and on the other Paradise with all its benevolent things, the justice of Allah and the crowd of people and in the midst I find myself also present there for the account of my deeds".

The Holy Prophet accepted the young man-s argument. The young man then requested the Holy Prophet to pray for him that he might die a martyr in the path of Allah. His request was accepted by the Holy Prophet. After sometime that young man participated in a battle in which he attained martyrdom.

Proof of Infallibility for a Divine Leader

We give below a Persian proverb as a proof of infallibility: "Salt preserves things from getting decayed, but what will happen on that day when salt itself gets decayed".

We need a leader to guide us because we are apt to err and commit wrong. But what will become of us when our leader will also err and commit wrong! Under such a situation that leader himself will need a leader who should be infallible.

It is also necessary that Allah should make the people know His commands so that they should not have any excuse for their faults. This thing cannot be done without the guidance of an infallible leader.

Thus the responsibility of an infallible leader cannot be entrusted to one who himself is liable to commit wrong and who is not safe from committing sins. It will, therefore, be a great injustice to the people if they are allowed to follow a leader who is not safe from committing wrong. Moreover, is it not man's disgrace, if he is put under the leadership of a sinner?

In this context, the Holy Qur'an narrates the following invocation of Prophet Ibrahim:

When his Lord tested Ibrahim's faith and he satisfied the test, He said, 'I am appointing you as the leader of men.' Ibrahim asked, 'Will this leadership also continue through my descendants?' The Lord replied, 'The unjust do not have the right to exercise My authority'. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:124)

In the Holy Qur'an we have been told at a number of places that we must obey the Holy Prophet. Therefore, this Divine commandment is the proof of the infallibility of the Holy Prophet because if the Prophets were also liable to err like other human beings then the Divine commandment on the obedience of the Holy Prophet would have been a conditional one just as in the case of the Divine commandment on the obedience of the parents have been made conditional despite its being obligatory. There are certain occasions when the off-springs are asked not to obey their parents at all. The Holy Qur'an says:

If they (the parents) try to force you to associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them.(Surah Luqman, 31:15)

By comparison you will realize that the conditional obedience of the parents is one thing and the unconditional obedience of the Holy Prophet is another, because the Prophet is at such a stage of infallibility that his obedience is not subject to any condition. The Holy Qur'an says about the Holy Prophet:

Your companion is not in error nor has he gone astray. He does not speak out of his own desire. It is a revelation which has been revealed to him. (Surah an-Najm, 53:3-4)

Points to Ponder

(i) Some people take certain Qur'anic verses as an excuse for doubting the infallibility of the Prophets. But according to the Qur'anic verses and the narrations as well as logical reasoning which we have with us, the infallibility of the Prophets is not at all affected by cautioning and instructions which are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an about the Prophets as

these things by themselves can open the way for the infallibility of the Prophets as well as for putting a check on treating the Prophets as extraordinary supernatural beings.

(ii) Lest the enemies should get a chance of finding fault with the Prophets and shake the belief of the believers, it is necessary that the Prophets should be innocent and infallible not only in matter of conducting their mission but also in all their beliefs and deeds. They should be absolutely free from any possibility of doing any wrong or committing any major or minor sin knowingly or inadvertently. They should not even fall into forgetfulness. The Holy Qur'an says:

Say: 'To Allah belongs the consummate argument. Had He willed He would surely have guided all of you aright'. (Surah al-An'am, 6:150)

Naturally, if the Prophets and the Imams had not been infallible, people would have found contradictions and variations in their words and actions and under such a situation would it be correct to say that Allah fulfilled His covenant for the people so as not to give them a plea against Allah? Thus the Prophets as well as the Imams must be infallible.

(iii) Infallibility of the Prophets does not come into conflict with the invocation and repentance of the Prophets but these are done only because the Prophets know that Allah is All-Aware and He knows their thoughts and intentions and thus they feel embarrassed with even all those actions which actually do not come under the definition of wrong or sin.

It is like this that if I cough in my house I do not feel any embarrassment, but if I am facing a television camera for delivering a lecture on Qur'anic lesson I shall become embarrassed even if I start coughing for once only, although coughing is not a sin. The feeling of embarrassment is because I find myself coughing before the people.

The saints consider themselves always before Allah and they unlike others are very much conscious of even a minute action of theirs and that is one reason why Prophets and the infallible Imams are always afraid of Allah and they always beseech Allah for His forgiveness.

Some Special Merits of the Prophets

• From the Qur'anic verses and the narrations we can enumerate some special merits of a Prophet of Allah:

• He should be the most learned man of his time.

• He should not suffer from any loathsome disease.

• He should be a personification of personal strength, capability, forbearance, moral conduct and noble attributes to the extent that nobody should surpass him in these qualities.

• He should not enjoin anything which is contrary to reason.

• The preceding Prophets had already prophesied of his Prophethood.

• He should understand people properly and thoroughly.

• He should be well-aware of human psychology, inclinations, weaknesses, passions, and should know how to guide them. He should know the social conditions, the causes of rise and fall of the society, and for the welfare of individuals and the society he should adopt effective measures with wisdom.

• His teachings should comply the natural demands and should be compatible with the teachings of preceding Prophets.

• He should come from noble parents.

• He should not be erratic and forgetful. He should be very submissive in offering his prayers. He should be bold and brave.

We can find the specimens of all these qualities and virtues of the Prophets in innumerable verses of the Holy Qur'an and in the traditions and narrations.

Submission to Allah

Contrary to all those people whose mode of thinking, action and deeds are influenced by even ordinary social status, the Holy Prophet despite being on the most exalted position of Prophethood was very submissive in obeying the commands of Allah as well as very humble in his behavior towards the believers.

It is a well-known fact that the Holy Prophet used to take the lead in greeting the children and doing his personal work with his own hands whether in home or on journey. In the battlefield he used to be nearer to the enemies than anybody else. The Holy Prophet often used to say:

I am only a human being like you. (Surah al-Kahf, 18:110)

The Holy Prophet never exerted pressure on anybody because of his superior authority. The Holy Qur'an says:

Allah would never give the Book and authority of Prophethood to any man who would tell others to be his servants instead of being the servants of Allah. He would rather tell them to worship Allah for they had been teaching and studying the Book. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:80)

The Prophets also do not have the right for interceding for their sons just as we know of Prophet Nuh whose intercession was rejected by Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

Nuh prayed to his Lord saying, 'Lord, my son is a member of my family. Your promise is always true and you are the best judge'. His Lord replied, 'He is not one of your family. He is a man of unrighteous deeds. Do not ask Me for that which you have no knowledge of. I advise you not to become an ignorant person. (Surah Hud, 11:45-46)

Knowledge of the Unseen:

One of the special traits of the Prophets is their knowledge of the unseen. In this behalf the Holy Qur'an says:

O He knows the unseen and He does not allow anyone to know His secrets except those of His Messengers whom He chooses. (Surah Jinn, 72:26-27)

A Question: We read in the Holy Qur'an that nobody but Allah knows the unseen:

He has with Him the keys to the unseen which no one knows besides Him. (Surah al-An'am, 6:59)

Hence, how one can attribute the knowledge of the unseen to the Prophets and the Imams?

Answer: Basically the knowledge of the unseen rests only with Allah and if a Prophet or an Imam knows anything of the unseen, this knowledge

comes only from Allah. It is not like that a Prophet or an Imam like Allah is himself the knower of the unseen.

In connection with an incidence when one of the wives of the Holy Prophet asked him as to how he knew about it, the Holy Prophet said as per Qur'anic verse:

The Prophet told a secret to one of his wives telling her not to mention it to anyone else. When she divulged it, Allah informed His Prophet about this. The Prophet told his wife part of the information which he had received from Allah and ignored the rest. Then she asked, 'Who informed you about this '. He replied, 'The All-Aware and All-Knowing One has told me'. (Surah at-Tahrim, 66:3)

Furthermore, the knowledge of the unseen is of two kinds

(i) Those things about which only Allah has the Knowledge and He has not passed on this Knowledge to anyone else as we often recite in our supplications: "O Allah! For the sake of the Knowledge of the unseen which is known to You only . . .".

(ii) There are some other matters which are concerned with knowledge of the unseen and the saints are endowed by Allah with their knowledge.

This knowledge of the unseen, obedience of Allah, infallibility, miracle, perfection, devotion, weeping, implorations, etc. are the things which distinguishes the Prophets from ordinary human beings and puts them on an exalted position.

We have heard of reformers whose sole aim in life was to carve out a social environment in which all and sundry should be dutiful and should perform noble deeds. But it is the Prophets only who with their special attributes and the knowledge of the unseen are distinct from all such reformers.

After elaborating the special traits and attributes of the Prophets in general, it seems appropriate now that we should talk about the life and the attributes of the Holy Prophet of Islam. It is hoped that his followers will draw inspiration from his life.

A Glance at the Life of the Holy Prophet

Among all the Prophets, the Holy Prophet is the only Prophet about whose life even ordinary matters have been recorded in history and this is a great accomplishment of the Muslim nation because the biographical sketches of other Prophets have been written after a lapse of considerable time with alterations and incorrect accounts by some of their followers.

However on the life and attributes of the Holy Prophets many books were written in Arabic language some details of which have been mentioned in our discussions on the signs of the Prophets. Thus it seems pertinent to give a brief account of the conduct and character of our Holy Prophet.

It would be profitable for all the Muslims to know the details of the Prophet's character, morals, and private life. Whatever is written in the following pages has been derived from Biharul Anwar, vol. XVI; Sirah-i Ibn Hisham, Kuhlul Basar, Tafsir al-Mizan, vol. VI and other authentic books.

His Compassion and Sympathy: Before the advent of Islam, it so happened that people were worried about the apalling conditions of famine.

Abu Talib, the uncle of the Holy Prophet was also equally perturbed because he had a large family to support and his resources were limited.

The Holy Prophet decided with his uncle Abbas to go to Abu Talib and in order to lessen the burden of his daily expenses, each one of them should take one son of Abu Talib. Thus Abbas took Ja'far and the Holy Prophet brought Imam Ali to his house and became his guardian from his very childhood. This was one example of the compassionate nature of the Prophet of Islam.

His Morals

The Holy Prophet used to sleep on the floor on a simple mat. He cobbled his shoes and patched his clothes himself. He smiled away any disgraceful remark. He would go to buy things for himself.

Anas bin Malik says, "For years I was in the service of the Holy Prophet but never even for once did he reprimand me on my fault. The Holy Prophet milked the she-goat himself, greeted the children first and accepted the invitation of his slaves. He would never make a disparaging remark about the food which was not of his liking.

He was particular about cleansing his teeth with Miswak, applying perfume and taking bath on Fridays. While going out of the house he put on white dress. While taking his food, he would never lean upon anything so that there might not be any sign of pride when he was sitting before Allah's bounties.

His Family Life

Despite the fact that most of the wives of the Holy Prophet were of advanced age, mothers of orphaned children, and were of varying nature and disposition, he treated them nicely as is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an: Treat them kindly ... (Surah an-Nisa, 4:19).

Though some of his wives treated him so badly that his companions used to advise him to leave them for the good. But he used to say that the shortcomings of a woman should be weighed with some of her good qualities also. One should not divorce one's wife on her minor fault or slight unpleasant behavior because women possess some good qualities and noble attributes also.

The Holy Prophet said: "Anyone who is affluent with regard to wealth and property but still remains stingy with his wife and children is not amongst us". (Mustadrak, vol. II, p. 643)

After the passing away of his beloved wife, Lady Khadija the Holy Prophet treated all those ladies who were her intimate friends with high esteem and favour.

The Holy Prophet used to say: "I treat my family members better than anyone else". (Wasa'il, vol. XIV, p. 122) 285

The Holy Prophet observed justice with his wives so strictly that even during his serious illness his bed was made each night by regular turns in every wife's chamber.

His Feelings For the New-born

A newborn baby was brought to the Holy Prophet for blessings or for giving him a name. The new-born passed urine in the lap of the Holy Prophet and the parents as well as the people standing around became very much embarrassed. At this the Holy Prophet said: "Don't mind. The little one is getting frightened of your making a noise. I shall have my clothes washed". (Kuhlul Basar)

His Initiative in Greeting the Children: The Holy Prophet used to call the name of the boys and girls with respect. He gave special instructions about respecting the girls. In his code of conduct the injunction for giving respect to the females is present. This is the view of the Holy Prophet. But once when on the birth of a female child the father of the child became so furious that his face turned black. The Holy Qur'an says:

When the glad news of the birth of their daughter is announced to them, their faces turn gloomy and black with anger. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:58)

Under such ghastly condition of the society, respect for the sons and daughters particularly of the daughter was a conspicuous thing. The Holy Prophet said: "The best of your offsprings are the daughters, and the sign of a woman's auspiciousness is that her first-born is a daughter". (Mustadrak, vol. II, p. 614-615)

A companion of the Holy Prophet was sitting with him. When he heard the news of the birth of his daughter he became displeased. The Holy Prophet then said to him: "When earth is her abode, the sky is her shelter and her livelihood is secure with Allah, why have you become so unhappy? She is like a flower spreading its fragrance and she will stand you in good stead". (Wasa'il, vol. XV, p. 101)

A man told the Holy Prophet that he had never kissed his child. The Holy Prophet said: "This is the sign of your cold bloodedness".

In the matter of giving equal treatment to all the children, the Holy Prophet said: "If you kiss a child before another, you should kiss the other one also".

He Was Not an Opportunist

One of the sons of the Holy Prophet was Ibrahim who expired early in his infancy. When after his death there happened to be a solar eclipse, people thought it was as a consequence of the demise of the son of the Holy Prophet. At this the Holy Prophet assembled the people and said: "The occultation of the sun was not due to the sad demise of my son, Ibrahim".

Thus the Holy Prophet got the people saved from falling into ignorance, superstition and undue love. On such an occasion if there had been a politician in place of the Holy Prophet he would have given a wrong interpretation of this incident and would have aroused the people to maintain undue love.

He Was Always on the Lead

In the Battle of Ahzab all the enemies of Islam, including the infidels, idolaters and hypocrites decided to wipe out Islam altogether and for this purpose they prepared to make a heavy attack on Madina.

The Holy Prophet decided to fight against the enemies and with the consultation of his companions it was decided that a trench might be dug

around the city of Madina as a first measure of defense. On this occasion the Holy Prophet took the lead in digging the trench and he engaged himself in this task until the trench was ready while some of the Muslims had taken leave and some others had gone away without taking permission.

His Hospitality

Salman Farsi, the loyal companion of the Holy Prophet said: "I happened to visit the Holy Prophet at his house. He offered me the same pillow which was the only one in his own use". Such a treatment of his visitors was not particularly shown to Salman Farsi but it was for every Muslim.

One day each of the foster brothers and sisters of the Holy Prophet separately came to the Holy Prophet. He treated the sister with greater respect than the brothers. When the people inquired about this distinction, the Holy Prophet replied: "As this sister used to respect her parents, I have greater regard and love for her". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XVI, p. 281)

Sometimes the guests of the Holy Prophet overstayed their welcome even after finishing with their meals and got themselves busy in conversation but still he tolerated it. At last a Qur'anic verse was revealed saying:

If you are invited, you may enter, but be punctual (so that you will not be waiting while the meal is being prepared). When you have finished eating, leave his home, and do not sit around chatting among yourselves. This will annoy the Prophet and he will feel embarrassed to tell you. (Surah al-Ahzab, 33 53)

His Extreme Dedication

The Holy Prophet used to wake up from his sleep after midnight. After prostrating himself before Allah, brushing his teeth with Miswak, and reciting a few verses of the Holy Qur'an, he got himself busy with the worship of Allah. Some of his wives used to say to him: "You are innocent and infallible and yet you do a lot of imploration!" The Holy Prophet would answer them by saying: "Should I not try to be a grateful servant of Allah".

During the month of Ramazan, the Holy Prophet used to free his slaves. While offering prayers he trembled with fear. When he offered his prayers alone he prolonged his bowing and prostration but in congregation he shortened them. One of his companions who was appointed to lead the congregational prayers was instructed by him to recite a short Surah after Surah al-Hamd so as not to prolong the duration of the prayers in congregation.

His Insight and Sagacity

While solving any problem, the Holy Prophet used to apply his foresight, and sense of justice.

When the different tribes of Arabia rebuilt the Holy Ka'ba, the dispute arose as to which tribe should install the sacred Black Stone (Hajar ul aswad) at its original place. This dispute was going to create an ugly situation. A man suggested that whoever came to the Masjidul Haram first of all in the early morning should be made to arbitrate between them.

The following morning the Holy Prophet was the first to come to the Holy Ka'ba and hence he was accepted as an arbiter in this dispute. The Holy Prophet then ordered them to bring a sheet of cloth.

When the cloth was brought he placed the sacred Black Stone in the middle of the sheet of cloth and asked every chief of the tribes to lift it from each corner and carry it near the Holy Ka'ba. Thereafter, the Holy Prophet picked up the sacred Black Stone and placed it at its original place. It was because of the Holy Prophet's insight as well as the sense of justice that the dispute was settled amicably.

The Holy Prophet in the Battlefield

Imam Ali says: "The Holy Prophet used to be always on the forefront in the battlefield to face the enemy. And in the Battle of Trench when it was decided to dig a trench around the city of Madina, the Holy Prophet was the first to pick up the pickaxe for digging the earth and he continued digging the trench along with his followers until the trench was completely ready".

The Holy Imam further says: "In the battlefields whenever we Muslims were faced with some difficulty, we took shelter of the Holy Prophet and sought his help and protection".

His Decisiveness

The Holy Prophet was never prepared to ignore his ideological program or any of its principles for the sake of increasing the number of his followers. Some people from Ta'if came to the Holy Prophet and said: "We can profess Islam provided that you give us permission for idol-worship and exempt us from offering prayers".

The Holy Prophet rejected their conditions straightaway. He did not care to increase the numerical strength of his followers at the cost of the fundamental principles of Islam. The Holy Prophet was not like those who would compromise on principles.

His Piety and Devotion

Once the Holy Prophet gave twelve Dirhams to Imam Ali to buy a dress for him (the Prophet). The Holy Imam went to the bazaar and brought a dress costing the same amount of money. The Holy Prophet seeing the dress said: "If the dress had been more simple, it would have been better. If the shopkeeper agrees to take back the dress and return it to him". The Holy Imam returned the dress and brought back twelve dirhams to the Holy Prophet.

This time the Holy Prophet went along with Imam Ali to the bazaar. On the way he saw a slave-girl who was crying. The Holy Prophet asked her the cause of her trouble. She said: "My master gave me four dirhams to buy things from the bazaar but I lost that amount of money. I am afraid of going back home because of my master".

The Holy Prophet gave that girl four dirhams and bought a dress for himself for four dirhams. On his way back home he saw a man who was without proper clothes. The Holy Prophet gave his dress to this man and came back to the bazaar to buy another dress for the remaining four dirhams left with him.

On his way back again the Holy Prophet saw the same slave-girl still standing there. She lamented that since she was already late for home she was scared of her master who would beat her for this.

The Holy Prophet accompanied the slave-girl to her master's house. In deference to the Holy Prophet's coming to his house the master not only excused the slave-girl but also freed her. The Holy Prophet then said: "Those twelve dirhams were so auspicious that they enabled two needy ones to clothe themselves and a slave-girl to become free". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XVI. p. 215)

Indeed if we care to cut down our personal expenditure we can help the needy to procure some of their basic needs.

The Holy Prophet owed a few dirhams to a Jew. One day he came to the Holy Prophet and demanded his money but the Holy Prophet had no money with him to pay off his debt. The Jew said: "I will not leave this place until you give me my money back". He stayed there till it was the Zohr (midday prayers) time. People offered their Zohr prayers.

Then the time for evening, dusk and night prayers came and the Jew was still there to pester the Holy Prophet. At last the people became annoyed. But the Holy Prophet said: "We are not supposed to be unjust to him".

Consequently the Jew who shadowed the Holy Prophet until the following day embraced Islam, and distributed his money in charity in the name of Allah. He said: 'I was not actually meaning to harm the Holy Prophet, for my intention was to test the Holy Prophet's high qualities of character ".

His Loyalty

Ammar Yasir, one of the celebrated companions of the Holy Prophet narrates: "Before the announcement of the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet, he and I together used to tend the cattle. One day I suggested to the Holy Prophet that a certain place was most suited for tending our cattle and we should go over to that pasture. The Holy Prophet agreed.

On the following day I found that the Holy Prophet had already reached there but he was holding his sheep off and was not allowing them to graze. On my asking the reason for this the Holy Prophet said: "There was an agreement between us that both of us together would graze our sheep and thus it was not proper on my part to graze my sheep without you doing the same at the same time".

His Method of Teaching

While teaching the people Islamic faith and moral conduct or answering questions, the Holy Prophet used to repeat his instructions three times so as to drive the idea home.

His Sheltering the Enemy

In the eight year of the migration, when the Holy Prophet left Madina at the head of an army and conquered Makkah? he entered the Holy Ka'ba and smashed up all the idols in it. Safwan, one of the chiefs of the idolaters, who belonged to the tribe of Umayya fled away to Jeddah which was at a

distance of a few miles from Makkah. Some people interceded with the Holy Prophet for his pardon.

The Holy Prophet then sent his head-gear to him so that he should be under protection while entering Makkah. Safwan returned from Jeddah and asked for a grace time of two months until he could think of embracing Islam. But the Holy Prophet gave him the grace period of four months instead of two months.

Safwan remained with the Holy Prophet on his many travels and after finding himself enchanted by the personality of the Holy Prophet and move by the powerful force of his preachings, voluntarily professed Islam as his religion. The Holy Qur'an says:

If the pagans ask you to give them refuge, give them asylum so that they may hear the words of Allah. Then let them return to their towns for they are ignorant people.(Surah at-Taubah, 9:6)

According to Islamic jurisprudence in Jihad (the Holy War against the infidels) the giving of shelter and asylum to infidels have been stressed.

His Behavior with the Enemies

On the occasion of the conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet pardoned even his blood-thirsty enemies and not only that he even pardoned the unbelieving woman who had conspired to kill him by cooking for him a poisoned meal.

Once an enemy of Islam happened to come to the Holy Prophet and instead of greeting him with the celebrated Islamic Greeting "Assalam u Alayka" (Peace be in you) he said "Assamu Alayka" (Death be on you) and insolently repeated these words several times, but despite possessing the means for revenge, the Holy Prophet replied back by saying "Wa Alayka" (Same be to you).

Some of those who were present there became very furiousat the insolent behavior of the enemy. They said to the Holy Prophet: "Why did you not retaliate upon your enemy?" The Holy Prophet replied: "I reciprocated his greeting in his own words that is, "The same on you" which he had wished for me".

Affectionate Treatment of His Friends

While on a journey people used to divide work among themselves and the Holy Prophet, too, had his work to do himself. He used to collect the firewood for cooking food. Despite his worthy companions desire not to let him work, the Holy Prophet would not agree to it.

Once when the Holy Prophet alighted from the camel's back and went to tether the animal to a tree, some companions rushed forward to do that little job but the Holy Prophet did not accept the help of the companions and instead said" "You too should not throw yourself upon the help of other".

Some Special Traits of the Holy Prophet

• The Holy Prophet readily accepted the invitation of the slaves and he considered it necessary to hold them in high regard like other notables of the tribes. However he would entrust their leadership to those who were held in respect by them.

• The Holy Prophet was not mindless of good or bad behavior. He used to encourage as well as admonish people as the occasion demanded. He was always much concerned about the proper guidance of the people In this context the following Qura'nic verse was revealed to him:

We have not revealed the Qur'an on you that you should be burdened, but as admonition for whom who fear. (Sura Ta Ha, 20:2)

• In a gathering the Holy Prophet gave so much individual attention to each other and every person that he thought that he was the only favorite of the Holy Prophet.

• Sometimes the companions suggested to the Holy Prophet to curse the enemies but he never agreed and instead prayed to Allah to show them guidance.

• Whenever he shook hands with somebody he would not withdraw until the other person withdrew his hand first.

• Whenever he went on riding he never allowed anybody to follow him on foot and instead he asked the people to go separately until he met them on the appointed place.

• The Holy Prophet never disappointed a beggar. A woman sent his son to the Holy Prophet and asked for his dress. When the son came to the Holy Prophet he gave him his dress. On this occasion the following Qur'anic verse was revealed to him.

Do not be niggardly nor extravagant that you may later feel reprehensive and constrained. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:29)

• Whenever he happened to attend a gathering he always seated himself at a lower place. He would readily accept a present howsoever humble it was. Whenever he found any Muslim or a companion missing in a meeting, he would immediately inquire after him. If he happened to be on a journey, he would pray for his safe return and if he happened to be sick he would pray for his speedy recovery.

• He would ask the people to sit in a circular seating arrangement so as not to give any distinction to anyone over the other.

• In matters of enforcing laws, he never showed special favour to anybody. Once one of his companions interceded with him for a woman of a famous tribe to excuse her punishment. At this the Holy Prophet said: "By Allah! I am not the one to relax the punishment ordained by Divine commandment in favour of anybody. If my own daughter Fatima had committed a theft, I would have not spared her even from the punishment".

• The Holy Prophet paid particular attention to the captives and the slaves and he himself married a captive woman and thus by this action of his the Muslims started showing regard to the captives and they freed many of them. The Holy Prophet asked the people to be kind to the captives and to feed them and clothe them like themselves and to call them by their names so as not to give them a feeling of inferiority.

• The Holy Prophet treated the poor and the rich alike and during the conversation he never allowed irrelevant or controversial things to be discussed, besides he never found fault with anybody nor did he indulge in laughter.

His Concern of the Common Man

Unlike those leaders who fled away from the scene of trouble and hardship or those who left their friends in the lurch and migrated from their town or country, the Holy Prophet stayed in Makkah all the time and instead sent his followers to migrate to Abyssinia (Ethiopia). While migrating to Madina, the Holy Prophet first sent a batch of the loyal followers to Madina.

His Consulting the People

In all those matters where there was no special command from Allah and they were left to the people's discretion, the Holy Prophet very often used to consult them before taking any decision. As for example on the occasion of the Battle of Uhud, the Holy Prophet set up an advisory council and consulted the people as to whether the believers should fight the battle outside Madina or they should remain within the city of Madina.

The Holy Prophet himself and a few of his companions were of the opinion that the battle should be fought in Madina and accordingly defense should be built up there, but most of the young people gave their opinion for fighting the battle outside Madina.

Here we see that the Holy Prophet gave preference to the opinion of young and zealous fighters over that of others including his own, and as such they all marched forward towards Uhud to face the enemy. What is more interesting is that the verse 159 of Surah Ale Imran was revealed after the set-back of the Muslims in the Battle of Uhud. (Tafsir-i Namuna, vol. III, p. 142)

The above-mentioned verse was revealed despite the fact that after accepting the opinion of the companions, Muslims had to suffer defeat. Allah says in the same verse as follows:

Forgive them and ask Allah to forgive (their sins) and consult with them in certain matters. But when you reach a decision trust Allah. Allah loves those who trust Him. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:159)

His Behavior with His Opponents

The treatment of the Holy Prophet with his opponents was based on the following Qur'anic injunction:

If they (the unbelievers) propose peace, accept it, and trust in Allah. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:61)

Of course, in another verse we read that if the doubts arise the agreement should be revoked. The Holy Qur'an says:

If you are afraid of treachery of some of your allies, you may disregard your treaty with them. Allah does not love the treacherous ones. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:58)

The Holy Qur'an says about the Jews and the Christians as follows:

Muhammad, say to the followers of the Bible, 'We must come to a common term. Let us worship no one except Allah nor consider anything equal to Allah, nor regard any of us as our lord besides Allah. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:64)

A group among the followers of the Bible would love to mislead you but they mislead no one save themselves. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:68)

Some of them speak ill of the Prophet saying, 'He listens to everything and believes what he hears'. Muhammad, tell them, 'He only listens to what

is good for you, believes in Allah and has trust in the believers. He is Mercy for the believers among you. Those who speak ill of the Messenger of Allah will face a painful punishment'. (Su rah at-Tauba, 9:61)

The Holy Prophet considered military preparations for fighting against the enemies of Islam, the necessity of coaching of youngster for the art and skill of archery and similar other skill of paramount importance. He used to say that in exchange for one single arrow that was shot at the enemy of Allah, its maker, its buyer who handed it over to the soldiers of Islam and the one who shot it at the enemy were ensured of Paradise.

In the case of hypocrites, we see that the Holy Prophet ordered the demolition of a Masjid that was built by the hypocrites. On the occasion of the Battle of Tabuk some hypocrites were conspiring against Islam in a room of a public inn.

When the Holy Prophet learnt of such a conspiracy he ordered the storming of the room where the plot was being hatched and accordingly the believers stormed the room over the heads of the hypocrites, (and those who survived were treated harshly).

The Holy Prophet did not offer the funeral prayers for these hypocrites. However, he was lenient towards the infidels when they wanted some more time to take a decision about their embracing Islam.

Family affiliations had no influence on his taking ideological decisions. It was the uncle of the Holy Prophet for whose condemnation a strongly worded Qur'anic verse was revealed. The Holy Qur'an says:

May the hands of Abu Lahab perish! May he too perish! His property and worldly gains will be of no help to him. He will suffer in a blazing fire and so too will his wife (who threw thorns and firewood in the Prophet's way). Around her neck will be a rope of palm tree. (Surah Lahab, 111:1-5)

Indeed the disruptionist's hands should be cut off no matter even if he happens to be the uncle of the Holy Prophet. In this connection there is clear injunction in the Holy Qur'an that believers cannot ask for the forgiveness of the infidels and polytheists. The Holy Qur'an says;

After it was made clear that the pagans are to be the dwellers of Hell, the Prophet and the believers should not have sought forgiveness from Allah for them even if they may have been relatives. (Surah at-Tauba, 9:113)

In the following verse Allah encourages the Holy Prophet lest the enemy's plot might shake his decision.

Do not yield to the disbelievers or the hypocrites, ignore their annoying you and trust in Allah. Allah is your all-Sufficient Protector. (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:48)

Exercise patience and let it be only for the cause of Allah. Do not be grieved about them nor be disappointed at their evil plans. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:127)

But they (the idols) will not be able to help them. Instead the disbelievers as the troops of the idols will be brought before Allah. (Surah Ya Sin, 36:75)

Muhammad, exercise patience against what they say, glorify your Lord with His praise before sunrise and sunset.(Surah Qaf, 50 39)

An Apology To the Holy Prophet

While writing on the merits of the Holy Prophet I am feeling helpless because of my limited knowledge. As a matter of fact an appreciation on the life and attributes of the Holy Prophet can only be undertaken by a person of the caliber of Imam Ali as it is the Holy Prophet whose praise has been done by Allah Himself, whom Allah takes him through the heavens and by whose auspicious presence the angels' abode becomes blessed.

It is the Holy Prophet whom the Divine carrier takes away from the Holy Masjid (the Ka'ba) in Makkah to Baytul Muqaddas (the Masjid in Jerusalem). The Holy Qur'an says:

Glory to Him who carried His servant during the night for a visit from the Holy Mosque (at Makkah) to the Aqsa Mosque (at Jerusalem). Whose precincts We have blessed, that We may show him some of Our signs. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:1)

On the one hand these exalted destinations are the proof of the exalted personality of the Holy Prophet. On the other hand we find his attributes and personal qualities of love and affection and refined thoughts and sympathetic behavior towards all. "Once a thirsty cat keeps an eye on the water container meant for the Prophet's ablution.

The Holy Prophet instead of using that water for ablution places it before the cat. The Holy Prophet is harder than the rock against the enemies and is softer than snow toward his friends. He foregoes his personal rights against his enemies also but in the implementation of the laws he is very strict, so much so that he swears that he would not forgive even his own daughter, if she ever committed any wrong". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XVI)

How dare we talk about the attributes of the Holy Prophet? We read in Nahjul Balaghah (Peak of Eloquence, ISP 1984) that when nobody could read or write, the Holy Prophet stressed the acquiring of knowledge by saying that it was obligatory for all the Muslims. Now after the passage of fourteen centuries we see that everybody is clamoring for acquiring knowledge.

At the time when on the murder of one person the entire tribe used to rise for taking revenge upon the murderer's people and several of their innocent people were put to death, the Holy Prophet stopped this heinous custom.

That was the time when savagery was at its peak. The Holy Prophet said that if anyone would drive his animal even on his journey to Makkah too fast, his testimony would not be considered reliable because the one who cruelly fatigues his animal is hard-hearted. The example of compassion and mercy that the Holy Prophet set before the people in those days became the sign of the success and grace of the nation. The Holy Qur'an says:

Believers, listen to Allah and the Messenger when they call you to that which gives you life. (Surah al-Anfal, 8.24)

The command of Allah is not without meaning when He says about the Holy Prophet of Islam as follows:

He who obeys the Messenger obeys Allah. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:80)

He does not speak out of his own desire. (Surah an-Najm, 53.3)

You are certainly on the right path. (Surah az-Zukruf, 43:43)

He will grant you a majestic triumph. (Surah al-Fath, 48:23)

How can one attempt to write something in praise of the Holy Prophet when Allah Himself has exalted his name and his mission in the following words?

(Muhammad), haven 't We comforted your heart and relieved you of the burden which had been a heavy weight upon your back, and exalted your fame? Surely with hardship there is ease. With hardship indeed there is ease. So when you are free, work diligently and turn to your Lord with all your love. (Surah al-Inshira, 94:1-7)

It is not possible that in these few pages we may throw light on the high morals of the Holy Prophet about whom Allah Himself says in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

You have attained a high moral standard. (Surah al-Qalam, 68:4)

The Holy Qur'an which describes this world a poor and insignificant thing makes the position of the Holy Prophet exalted. There can be no better appreciation of the Holy Prophet than the one given in the Holy Qur'an as follows:

(Muhammad), We have granted you abundant virtue. So worship your Lord with full dedication and sacrifice. It is surely your opponents whose line will come to end. (Surah al-Kauthar, 108:1-3)

And in the Hereafter too, Allah dignified the position of the Holy Prophet as an interceder.

What can I write about the highly exalted attributes of the Holy Prophet whose birth extinguished the leaping flames of the Fireplace of Persia, and who’s being installed as Prophet removed all disturbances and chaotic conditions from the land.

When he was born the foundation of the palace of Kisra, the ancient monarchs of Persia (Iran), were shaken. When he was assigned to Prophethood the entire humanity got wonder-struck. It was he, whom the Holy Qur'an declared the "Mercy for the whole Universe". Who can write and how can we write about such a unique personality?

What can I say about him, who reaches such a lofty place of honour that he becomes the guest of Allah on the night ofMa'raj (ascension); and yet who, in his humbleness, declares that he would not turn down the invitation of a slave and would travel a far off distance in order to share a simple food with him?

For his journey to the heavens, Buraq, a Divine carrier, was provided to him, while at his own, he never hesitated to ride on a mule. The Archangel Jibra'il who brings the Divine revelation to him conveys him the greetings of Allah, and he himself is so humble in disposition that he first greets the children.

In the state of prostrating himself before Allah he submits his forehead and heart before Allah and when his two grandsons (Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn) find him under that position and ride on his back, he prolongs his prostration so that their feeling might not be hurt.

How to speak of him, who at one and the same time is dedicated to the worship and remembrance of Allah and is also mindful of the feelings of the two children! The people should take lesson from this in the matter of

upholding the rights of children, men, women and the labourers and they should be ashamed of raising empty slogans.

The Holy Prophet remains cheerful with the people while he is in their company He sheds tears also at the demise of his son, Ibrahim. But in either case he does not exceed the limit and does not do anything against the Will of Allah.

In the morning he offers his prayers, passes the time in the midst of his companions during the day, and lets the companions with one another in useful pursuits, not for fun and pleasure, including riding and archery which can stand them in good stead in times of self-defense against the oppressors. And the prize that is awarded is the date-palm tree, the leaves of which provide pleasant shade, the wood as fuel, and the fruit as food.

False Accusations

Is it correct to make false allegations against Islam whose Prophet gives a grace period of four months instead of the two asked for, on the day of the conquest of Makkah; makes the house of his arch-enemy as sanctuary of peace; announces general amnesty and pardons to all his opponents and bears with patience hardships for fifteen years at the halls of the infidels of Makkah, and if he takes his sword in hand to protect himself and his faith and to defeat the nefarious designs of his enemies and asks the believers to wage Jihad (Holy War) against them so as to emancipate mankind from treachery, savagery, oppression, and to liberate man from all kinds of domination and subjugation? Certainly not.

Sometimes the opponents say that Islam was spread at the point of the sword and this is not correct because from historical facts and evidence the total number of those killed was not more than 1700 from both sides in all the battles of Islam against enemies.

Sometimes the opponents find fault with the Holy Prophet that he married too many wives and mislead the people by insinuating, God forbid, that he was lustful, although the fact is that the Holy Prophet passed the youthful years of his marital life with only wife, the revered Lady of Islam, Khadija-tul Kubra up to the age of fifty years, and his wedding with her was solemnized at the initiation of Lady Khadija when she was forty and the Holy Prophet was twenty five years old.

Lady Khadija had already rejected the offer for marriage of several other men who wanted to marry her because of her financial standing. But Lady Khadija proposed to the Holy Prophet because he was found to be a trustworthy, truthful and righteous person enjoying high reputation in the whole of the Arabian Peninsula and besides, she had already heard from her uncle Warqa bin Nawfal the prophecies of the preceding Prophets about the appearance of the Holy Prophet as the Prophet of Allah and of her marriage with him.

The Holy Prophet spent 25 years of his married life with Lady Khadija and spent her wealth in the preaching of Islam and to relieve mankind from ignorance and tyrannies although there were some of the choicest girls wanted to marry him, but he always refused their offer.

The other wives of the Holy Prophet were married to him only after the demise of his first wife Lady Khadija and that too when he had passed the

age of fifty. These women were of elderly age and were widows and had orphaned children and hence he had to lead a hard and strenuous life with them instead of life of ease, comfort, and indulgence.

These wives of the Holy Prophet were of varying temperament and dispositions and as such it was not easy to get along with them. The husbands of some of these wives were martyred while fighting against the infidels and as such they needed protection for themselves and the orphans. If they had not been married to the Holy Prophet they would have reverted to infidelity.

One among them was Sauda whose husband died after he had migrated to Abyssinia and she was left without any patron and supporter. Umm Salama was another such wife who was of old age and was mother of orphaned children.

Zaynab was also another wife of the Holy Prophet who was the daughter of his aunt from the father's side. She was first married to Zayd bin Harith, the slave and adoptive son of the Holy Prophet. Her marriage with Zayd did not last long and she was divorced by him. Then she married the Holy Prophet.

The Holy Prophet married Zaynab at Allah's command so that the very root and basis of a wrong custom might be abolished. According to this custom of the Age of Ignorance nobody was allowed to marry the wife of his adopted son and in this case since Zayd was the adopted son of the Holy Prophet, the latter could not marry Zaynab, the divorced wife of the former. But Allah ordered this marriage in order to abolish this custom at the hands of the Holy Prophet himself.

Juwayria, another wife of the Holy Prophet was a captive. Her marriage with the Holy Prophet motivated the Muslims to treat the captives with great regards and kindness so much so that they freed many of them.

Besides, with a view to maintain cordial relations among various influential tribes, to prevent disruption among them, and to promote internal stability, the Holy Prophet married such women as Ayesha, Hafsa, Umm Habiba, Safiya and Maymuna.

Safiya of course was the daughter of the tribal chief of a big Jewish tribe of Bani Nuzayr. When she was taken prisoner, the Holy Prophet married her and established relationship with a big tribe.

In short, many of the wives of the Holy Prophet were those who had passed the age of youth and personal charm, and most of them had been married once or twice before, and had orphaned children with them, and whom the Holy Prophet married when he was past fifty, an age which by no means can be regarded as an age of youthful and lustful desires and by that time he had attained great reputation already, and that many a beautiful girl aspired to marry him.

This is the proof of the fact that the purpose of the Holy Prophet in contracting various marriages was based on pious and noble cause only and as such no sane person can dare attack his personal character.

Besides keeping these wives, the Holy Prophet most often passed his nights in offering prayers and remembering Allah as he did in his youth

also. The Holy Qur'an says about his dedication and worship of Allah as follows.

You, who have enwrapped in a mantle, worship (Allah) for only a few hours at night. (Surah Muzzammil, 73:1-3)

It is only we who even for the sake of one wife forsake Allah. If the number of wives does not prevent anyone from getting right guidance, spiritual enlightenment, performing religious duties of offering prayers, attending jihad, uplifting the society and doing justice to wives themselves and instead it becomes the source of their support and protection, there cannot be any reason for criticism.

If somebody feels the prick of conscience at the number of wives a man has then it may be due to any of the following reasons:

(i) If the husband is not giving just treatment to his wives.

(ii) If the idea of having many wives is aimed at satisfying ones lustful desires.

(iii) If the husband gets himself involved in investing his energies and talents in pampering his wives.

If none of the above conditions is present then keeping of wives cannot be prevented from any moral or social standpoint.

Answer to Some Questions. We have so far dealt with the necessity of the Prophets' mission, ways and means of recognizing them and their attributes and personal qualities. Now we deal with the answers to some of the doubts created in the minds of the people.

(i) Have the Prophets Founded an Ideal Society? Answer: For teaching and guidance, the sending of the Prophets as well the Divine commandments are necessary and their obedience by the people is another necessity. Both are distinctly separate. It was not the Divine Will to guide the people by force only. Had it been so everybody would have received the right guidance. The Holy Qur'an says:

Had Allah wanted He could have guided all to the right path. (Surah Nahl, 16:9)

Thus, the Prophets were also not supposed to force their teachings on the people. The Holy Qur'an says:

(Muhammad), remind them; you are surely a reminder. You are not a warden over them. (Surah al-Ghashiya, 88:22)

Allah provides the means for guidance. The Holy Qur'an says:

Surely, in Our Hands is the guidance. (Surahal-Layl,92:12)

However the people should also accept the guidance. If some people refuse to accept the Divine guidance they should not become an obstruction in its way, just as a gardener does not abstain from watering the land in the presence of weeds, while there are also good trees. The Holy Qur'an says:

When your Lord said to the angels, I am appointing someone as My deputy on earth, they said (almost protesting), 'Are You going to appoint one who will commit corruption and bloodshed therein, even though we (are the ones who) commemorate Your name and glorify You?' The Lord said, 'I know that which you do not know'.(Surah al-Baqarah, 2;30)

In order to prove a new concept it is sufficient to train the people and to set examples. If a mason or a painter shows some specimens of his craft and

skill, it will be sufficient to establish his efficiency or proficiency in that particular field.

I remember that some years ago, a pupil got up after my lecture and asked: "If Islam is a good religion then why has it not spread widely?" My instant retort was: "If Muhammad Ali clay is a good boxer, then why has he not boxed our chest?" There was a chuckle of laughter.

A good mason, a painter, a boxer or an orator is not the one who works for everybody or shows his skill to everybody. If he has not done anything for you, the reason is that you have not asked him to do something for you.

If the voice of a speaker or an orator does not reach us, the reason is that we are far from him. If Muhammad Ali clay has not boxed us as yet, the reason is that we have not gone to the ring to face him. If the Prophets have not shaped a good society or the message of Islam has not gone far and wide, the fault lies with us only.

According to a poet: "If one turns into a beggar his people are not to blame for his lethargic nature". The same applies here. That is to say if the people themselves have become indifferent to the spirit of Islam, Islam itself cannot be blamed.

The Prophets lay the foundation of a society free from flaws strictly in line with Divine commandments and they themselves act upon them in order to give a lead to the people. They in fact present a model of a social environment and invite the people to fashion their social life on the same pattern.

Our blessed Holy Prophet molded a nation comprising the black and white and people of different kinds and types drawn from various tribes and laid its foundation on the belief in Allah and on the war against polytheism and transgressions perpetrated by feudal lords and despotic chiefs.

He eliminated all differences of cast and creed among men as well as superstitious ideas, whims and fancies of the people and established moral values, discipline, unity, equality, justice, freedom, righteousness, sincerity, grace, honor obeisance to Divine commandments and remembrance of Allah He trained such great men as Imam Ali, Abuzar, Salman, Miqdad and Maytham.

He brought out the laws which were compatible with reason and natural instinct and in order to establish and enforce the supremacy of the Divine laws he never hesitated to offer his and as well as his followers' lives to achieve that objective.

Now when we see that the people have not as yet adopted the Prophets' concept of life and their school of thought, we should trace out the reasons for such apathy instead of criticizing that school of thought or blaming its progenitors.

The sun shines on everything. When it shines on a glass it reflects its light and when its rays fall on a brick it does not reflect but despite this we do not doubt about the sun and its light. It is because if we throw several hundred thousand airtight sealed cylinders into an ocean we shall note that water does not enter those sealed containers.

If they are not sealed water will certainly enter them. Similarly, there are people whose eyes, ears and hearts are sealed. The Holy Qur'an says:

We have destined most of the men and jinns for Hell. They have hearts but do not understand, eyes but do not see. They have ears but do not hear. They are worst than lost cattle. These are the heedless ones. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:179)

Anyone who has the faculty of discerning the truth, of hearing and of seeing but does not apply it, is worse than animals.

That man whose sole purpose of life is to eat, drink and be merry is definitely not better than animals. Those different schools of thought and ideologies which clamor for food, clothes and shelter for the people confine man's talents and intellectual activities to the limited sphere of corporeal needs only and thus these doctrines reduce man's position of being a vicegerent of Allah to a ridiculously shameful status.

In short, it is the man who should give the society a good shape. The Prophets are the leaders and guides and the people should follow their guidance. The Prophets are the healers and the sick should follow their treatment.

We now seek support of our arguments from the following verses of the Holy Qur'an:

Allah does not guide the unjust. (Surah al-Qasas, 28:50)

Allah does not guide the evil-doers. (Surah al-Munafiqun, 63:6)

Allah does not guide a transgressing liar. (Surah Mu'min, 40:28)

From the foregoing Qur'anic verses it becomes abundantly clear that there are people who because of their polytheism, unjustness, oppression, evil deeds and falsehood have become indifferent to obtaining guidance given by the Prophets and to carve out for themselves a good social order.

There is on the very first page of the Holy Qur'an a declaration which says-

There is no doubt that this Book is a guide for the pious.(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:2)

The Holy Qur'an was revealed for the entire mankind but it is the pious people who preserve themselves from evil things and follow the straight path, have in right earnest accepted it as the source of guidance and thus have abstained from haughtiness, pride, high-handedness, enmity, transgression and greed in the search for truth.

And those who do not give up their stubbornness fanaticism, envy, prejudice and other evils which are a hindrance in the way of truth cannot receive any benefit from the teachings of the Prophets.

(ii) Is Divine Revelation a Sort of Intelligence? Some people, who do not believe in man's connection with the Hereafter, try to invent the reason which necessitated the Divine revelation as for example they say that unemployment, social inequalities, deprivation and love and affection are the things which compel man to endeavor to solve them and as such they sharpen man's intelligence.

In the Prophets also these were the factors of the growth of their talents and there is no harm, they say, if we consider the Prophets as one of such geniuses.

If you care to give a second thought to what we have dealt with in the preceding chapter on "The Attributes and Personal Qualities of the

Prophets" you will make out at once that there is a world of difference between a genius and a Prophet.

Infallibility, forgetfulness, refraining from committing any sin, sincerity, knowledge of the unseen through Divine guidance, selfless devotion and worship of Allah, supplications and resigning to the Will of Allah are some of the traits which are not found at all in a genius or a talented person as he is always skeptical, is not free from sins, has no knowledge of the unseen, is far away from Allah's cognition and worship and has no concern with Allah.

And perhaps there is not one in this world who could be called a genius as the so-called genius persons have not been able to produce anything like the Holy Qur'an! The comparison between a genius and a Prophet is like the one which exists between a limited and a limitless, because what a genius person possesses is limited while what a Prophet can do is due to the infinite Knowledge and Wisdom of Allah and that is why Prophets' achievements and accomplishments are not confined to one or two specimens only.

(iii) Why Did All the Prophets Appear in the East Only? We have no definite proof that all the Prophets came to the East. According to the following Qur'anic verse a Prophet was sent to every nation.

For every people there is a Messenger. (Surah Yunus,10:47)

Just as we put a lamp in the center of a room, it is possible that Allah sent His distinguished Prophets to the areas which are neither in the East nor in the West.

(iv) Why is it Necessary to Believe in All the Prophets? In the Holy Qur'an the names of twenty five Prophets have been mentioned. The Holy Qur'an says.

We have told you the stories of some of Our Messengers whom we had sent before you and we have not told you the stories o f some others. (Surah Mu'min, 40: 78)

From this verse we know that the number of the Prophets is not restricted to those twenty five Prophets whose names are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. But if we refer to various narrations we come across various versions but one of such narrations is famous which is quoted as Hadith of the Holy Prophet from his companion, Abuzar who says: "I asked the number of the Prophets from the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet replied "Hundred and twenty four thousand! " (Majma'ul Bayan, vol. X, p. 476; Biharul Anwar, vol. XI, p. 30)

The answer to the question whether belief in all the Prophets is necessary the answer is definitely "yes", because the Holy Qur'an says:

(Muslims) say, 'We believe in Allah and what He has revealed to us and to Ibrahim, Isma'il, Ishaq, Ya'qub and their descendants, and what was revealed to Musa, Isa and the Prophets from their Lord. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:136)

Those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers try to create differences between Allah and His Messengers, by rejecting their message. They say, we believe in some but not in others. (Surah an-Nisa, 4: 150)

Thus from the above quoted Qur'anic verse it is not only clear that the belief in the Prophets has been made obligatory, but it also means that the Prophethood of the Prophets has not been a merely accidental thing but it

was a fact which was in accordance with the command of Allah. The Divine command that we should believe in the Prophets and follow their teachings is the proof of Allah's Mercy on all His creatures. It shows the Wisdom of Allah that is the eternal necessity of following an infallible guidance of the Prophets.

And besides, it reveals the fact that in the long period of history men have been supporting the truth on the one hand, and fighting against the evil forces of transgressors, oppressors and despots on the other, and ultimately the righteous were triumphant and the evil-doers had to suffer disgrace. This knowledge, and belief in Allah's method is the cause of man's progress, steadfastness, and eminence in history.

(v) Why are Revelations not made On Us? Undoubtedly a radio-set cannot catch all the waves and sounds. It can catch only those sounds which are transmitted on particular wave-lengths. Similarly, every man cannot have -revelations. Truthfulness, righteousness, piety and several other qualities are required in a man for receiving Divine revelations and inspirations. Revelation has its own merit. It is only the pious and believing people who can discern the truth. The Holy Qur'an says:

Have fear of Allah and believe in His Messenger. Allah will grant you twice as much of His Bounty, a light by which you can walk, and forgive your sins. (Surah al-Hadid, 57:28)

You can see that, light of the inward eye is not bestowed on everyone except those who fear Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

Believers, if you fear Allah, He will give you guidance, will expiate your bad deeds and forgive you. Allah's favors are the greatest. (Surah al-Anfal, 8.29)

Man needs to distinguish between the right and the wrong, good and evil, friend and enemy and blessings and misfortunes and his intellect helps him do so, but greed, passions, pride, jealousies, love of wealth, wife and children and many other temporal considerations prevent his intellect and wisdom from discerning good from bad. But in that case piety can make him discover his real wisdom and understand the realities.

A poet has says. "Reality is a sort of a well-decorated and well-elevated house which is surrounded by heavy dust of temptations and ambitions which cannot be seen by naked eyes".

Another poet says: "One has to remove the polluted atmosphere before looking at the beauty of his beloved".

But in a society where newspapers, television and radio centers are transmitting news which are based on consideration of worldly gains, people cannot recognize the truth and reality and if these media stop propagating prejudiced views, the society can to a great extent distinguish between good and bad, and right and wrong. The Holy Qur'an says:

Be careful of (your duty) to Allah, Allah gives you knowledge, and Allah knows all things. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:282)

Indeed man's heart is like a mirror and if the dust is wiped out of it, it will glow with the Divine light. For realizing the truth one needs to have a clean heart and right thinking. The Holy Qur'an regarding the Holy Prophet says:

Had he (Muhammad) invented some words against Us, We would have caught hold of him by his right hand and cut off his main artery. (Surah al-Haqqah, 69:44-46)

(vi) Why was Prophethood terminated After the Holy Prophet? When water in a reservoir gets turbid it is drained out and fresh water is poured into it. When a road, a house or a car is damaged we repair them. Similarly, the necessity of a new Prophet is felt when the teachings of the previous Prophets are tampered with or they are forgotten.

Hence, when not a single word of the Holy Qur'an has been altered, there should be no necessity of a new Prophet. But it is different with other Divine Books. If one looks into the Taurat and the Injil, one will find many wrong things which are contrary to reason, and after reading them one would feel much ashamed.

The reason of the coming of the Holy Prophet as the last of the Prophets is the tampering with .the Divine Books which have been revealed on earlier Prophets and the suppressing of the truth. Such a tampering has not been made possible in the Holy Qur'an.

Example: If an illiterate person wants to travel to a distant place, he goes around from place to place to find out the location of his ultimate destination and he enquires about it from people around him but in case such a person happens to be learned he would be given a road map by which he can himself find his way to his ultimate destination.

Similar is the case with the man who has obtained a complete guidance of the code of life from the Holy Prophet. He does not need to look for any other Prophet.

Second Example: When a child falls sick, the parents point out to him things one by one which he should abstain from as for instance, vinegar, sour grapes, lemon juice, etc. But when one would give the same sort of instruction to a grown up man, he will only say, "Avoid eating sour things".

In the olden times the people needed to be told of each and every lanes and by-lanes because they were mentally not fully-developed but now when the time has gone much advanced a man can find his a way out by means of a guide-map or other given indications.

Thus in the present day civilization one need not have any new Prophet but for the preservation of Islam, the Imams and the religious jurists would suffice them. Besides, during the time of the former Prophets only a few of them brought with them the Divine Books and the rest of them were only devoted to their missionary work of preaching only as they had not brought with them any new commandments.

Similarly, when in our time this responsibility of preaching and carrying on the mission of the Holy Prophet can be shouldered by the infallible Imams and the pious and devout scholars there remains no necessity of any new Prophet.

Indeed there is always the necessity of the Divine religion and its teachings, but it is not necessary always to reorient religion. We should not, however be oblivious of the necessity of 'Ijtihad' because the just and pious jurists have the answer of all relevant matters by virtue of which they can interpret the meaning of all Divine commands.

These were a few examples of the questions which are raised from time to time but to be brief here we cannot discuss more of them.

Prophets' Achievements

In the preceding pages, we have dealt with briefly about the indispensability of the Prophets, the signs of their identification, their merits, attributes, virtues etc. Under the current discussions we shall mention the. Prophets' achievements and their pious goals. In all such discussions, it has been our method to rely on the authority of Divine revelations and the narrations of the Infallible Imams.

First of all let us look into the Holy Qur'an and find out as to how Almighty Allah traces the duties of the Prophets.

The Duties of the Prophets

1. Allah addresses Prophet Musa saying:

Go to Fir'aun as he has become exceedingly rebellious.(Surah Ta Ha, 20:24)

Indeed it was the Prophets who fought against the tyrants and the rebels. It is not like the people of our time who raise slogans against the despots and imperialistic powers but do not go a step ahead of slogan-mongering.

To eliminate these despots and proud transgressors paves the way for monotheism because unless all the false gods and demigods are destroyed, we cannot reach the true Lord. The phrase: La ila ha illal lah (There is no god save Allah) is a part and parcel of our faith (monotheism), we begin with "There is no god" in order to emphasize our faith in Oneness of Allah and to assert our determination against all false gods. Thereafter, we genuinely become aware of Allah. In fact, unless we clean our hearts of all other things except Allah we cannot make it a seat of Allah, the One.

2. The Holy Qur'an says about Allah's directive to Prophet Musa to go to Fir'aun as follows:

So go you both to him and say, 'Surely we are two messengers of your Lord, therefore send the children of Isra'il with us and do not oppress them! Indeed we have brought to you a token from your Lord, and peace is on him who follows the guidance '. (Surah Ta Ha, 20:47)

Indeed one of the other important duties of the Prophets is to liberate their people from the oppressive domination of the despotic rulers. But this action of the Prophets is obviously different from that of our present day political leaders of various governments as they only indulge in slogan-mongering and tall talks. We see that Prophet Musa not only liberated the people of Bani Isra'il but also destroyed Fir'aun.

On the other hand the present-day champions of the so-called human rights do not defray even their one month's income of their lifelong earning of colossal amount of money and wealth for liberating the downtrodden and enslaved people.

In fact they have not done anything tangible for the cause of uplifting the rights and benefits of the poor and the oppressed people. Rather in the name of human rights they have preserved their own rights! Has the time not come now that people should dissociate themselves from these showy

organizations of human rights and start following the teachings of the Prophets?

3. The Holy Qur'an says about Prophet Ibrahim's determination when he said to himself:

By Allah! I will devise a plan against their idols when they are away. (Surah al-Anbiya, 21:57)

The third important duty that vested in the Prophets was to fight against polytheism and superstitions and to root out the cult of idol-worship of all kinds, worship of gods and demigods among men, etc. They carried on relentless war against power, authority, temporal desires, wealth and other kinds of polytheism.

And this was the goal before Prophet Ibrahim. After trying all possible means by persuading his uncle with softspoken words, arguing with Namrud with logic and reasoning and convincing the worshippers of sun and moon by his strong arguments, he found that his efforts had gone in vain.

He then decided to declare to the pagans at the top of his voice that he was going to destroy their idols very soon and he actually did it, because when admonition, preaching, and arguments have no effect on the people, then a decisive and revolutionary action is necessary to arouse the moral sense of the people.

Thus we see that on a day when the city had become void of people, Prophet Ibrahim went to the temple with his pickaxe and demolished all the idols kept there except the chief of them, a big giant-sized idol, in whose neck he hung his pick-axe and came back. The Holy Qur'an says about this as follows:

He broke all the idols into pieces, except the biggest among them so that perhaps people would refer to it. (Surah al-Anbiya, 21:58)

When the people returned to the city and visited their temple, they asked one another as to who was so cruel as to break their gods in such a manner, but soon they started thinking of Prophet Ibrahim and said to themselves that this sort of action must have been done by him only as he had always been objecting to their worshipping their idols. They said. "Ibrahim should be brought before the people so that he should confess his guilt, and we should punish him accordingly".

When the people caught hold of Prophet Ibrahim they asked him, "Why have you broken our idols?" Prophet Ibrahim replied, "You should better put this question to the chief of your idols. He will answer your query". People started looking to one another and then said: "But this idol does not speak".

Prophet Ibrahim who was waiting for this reply, saw that the people had become non-plussed and had bowed their heads down. Then he spoke in a loud authoritative tone: "You worship those idols who do not have any control on your loss or gain! Can you not realize this simple thing?"

This story which starts from verse 58 of Surah Anbiya of the Holy Qur'an actually depicts one of the miracles of the Prophets, who dauntlessly stood alone against polytheism and superstitions and face all dangers in order to stir the sleeping conscience of the people. It shows how Prophet Ibrahim plunges himself into the fire of the world in order to save the people from disaster of the blazing fire of Hell.

We know how the cruel enemies burnt the fire and threw this champion of monotheism into it. They did not know that their device would prove futile and Prophet Ibrahim would come out of the fire safe and unharmed.

4. The Holy Qur'an says:

O Dawud! We have appointed you as Our deputy on earth so judge among the people with Truth. Do not follow (worldly) desires lest you should go astray from the way of Allah. Those who go astray from the way of Allah will suffer severe torment for forgetting the Day of Judgment.(Surah Sad, 38:26)

This verse also points out yet another important aspect of the Prophets' achievements and their duties and obligations, that is to say their responsibility of deciding things based on truth and justice. The Holy Qur'an says.

A Messenger is appointed for all people. When the Messenger for them came he judged among them fairly, and they were not wronged. (Surah Yunus, 10:47)

5. The Holy Qur'an says:

The Messenger enjoins them to do good and forbids them to do all that is unlawful; makes lawful for them all that is pure, and unlawful all that is filthy; removes their burdens and the entanglements in which they are involved. (Surah A'raf, 7:157)

The Prophets brought about a cultural revolution in the society and brought the people from savagery to compassion from idols to Allah; from dissension to unity; from plundering and murdering to brotherhood; from domination to moderation; from ignorance to knowledge; from oppression to justice; from racial discrimination to equality; from pride to humbleness and humility; and from polytheism to monotheism.

6. The Holy Prophet of Islam like all other Prophets used to forbid people to do all that is unlawful.

Before the advent of the Holy Prophet, the life of the people of Arabia was in a miserable state from the point of view of philosophical, cultural, social, economical, corporeal and spiritual conditions. Imam Ali says:

"From the point of view of intellect, the light for receiving guidance was affected by bewilderment, uncertainty and narrow sightedness.

From the point of view of culture, there was nobody who could read a book.

From the point of view of faith and belief they had, installed idols made of wood and stone for worshipping them and they used to swarm round them like moth swarming round a candle flame.

From the point of view of hygienic, those people drank turbid water and used to eat carcass.

From economic point of view they were in such a miserable condition of poverty that mostly people ate dried crust of bread or starved.

From the point of view of peace and tranquility, people were scared of the sword which was hanging on their heads and it was the sword which ruled them actually.

From the social point of view, they were divided in tribes and factions and had differences and disputes over trifles so much so that they never hesitated to kill one another.

There was no consideration of family bonds, the righteous was weak and the devilish was strong and everyone was in tears". (Peak of Eloquence)

On the one hand everybody was scared of the swords of another, but apparently they used to pose themselves as brave and powerful people in order to intimidate others.

In the words of Imam Ali the sad state of affairs at that time was as follows: "They shed your blood with excessive cruelty".

In short those people of the Age of Ignorance were leading miserable lives in superstitions, abject poverty, oppression, rivalries and polytheism.

When the Holy Prophet came, he rooted out oppression and domination and dispelled the dark clouds of ignorance, injustice and infidelity which were hovering over the society.

Indeed the Prophets' great function is to forbid people to do unlawful things and to fight against all evils, whether it be manslaughter, burying the newborn female child alive or prostrating themselves before the despotic monarch as it was done in Iran or before the idols as was done in Arabia or wine-drinking and usury which were common everywhere.

What greater service can it be to the humanity than to liberate mankind from these unlawful evil deeds?

Had we been aware of the lives of these Divine leaders and real reformers we would not have given importance to these people who claim to be the leaders of poor laborers, and themselves live in palatial houses.

These are the so-called philosophers, thinkers, leaders and emancipators who got hundreds and thousands of people destroyed for nothing in the name of knowledge and philosophical dogmas. Would that we continued to follow in the footsteps of the Prophets as their teachings and guidance were true and invigorating, and they were righteous and truthful leaders while others are neither sincere nor truthful.

When we go back into the past few years, we can find the devastating defects in the ideological concepts of the present day leaders. Even those reformers who said something about the good of the society, we can find that the teachings of the Prophets were far superior to that of theirs. As a matter of fact any leader or reformer who is not blessed by Divine insight cannot see things beyond death but the path that is shown by the Prophets for the life is everlasting.

Secondly the path of life which other leaders show only deals with one aspect of life and as such other aspects become neglected. As for instance sometimes for the sake of freedom and liberty other values, moral as well as social, are neglected altogether.

Sometimes stress is laid on economical factors so that economics becomes the basis of social, political, religious and military aspects while other factors are ignored altogether. But the Prophets without undermining the importance of one aspect or the other of life presents the line of action which is conspicuously attached with the Prophets.

It is only Islam, which even in the battlefield considers offering of prayers, moral values and reformation as fundamentally important and in this the offering of prayers in congregation is not only considered an obligatory worship but it envisages in itself political and social consideration also.

Now we deal with the 7th important duty of the Prophets.

7. Prophets Purify and Train the People

One of the aims of the Prophets is to impart knowledge and to let the people practice self-denial for unless man frees himself from undesirable things like selfishness, ignorance, arrogance etc. he cannot develop his personality. We should like to narrate the following story at this point:

A man riding on a horse came to the bank of a river with shallow water. His horse instead of crossing the river stopped near the water.

The rider got down from his horse and taking the bridle in his hand started leading the horse into the river but the horse did not move at all. At this the rider went behind the horse and started lashing the animal but it also proved to be of no avail. An old man who was standing by was observing all this.

He advised the rider to beat the river water with his whip and then asked the rider to pass through the water. He acted upon the advice of the old man and the horse came into motion. After crossing the river, the horseman thanked the old man and inquired about the wisdom of turning the water turbid by beating the water with the whip.

The old man replied, "When the water was still, the horse was looking its reflection in the water and did not want to walk over its own image which was reflecting on the surface of water '.

Similarly, man suffers from self-esteem, self-conceit and pride. He cannot trample upon his own image of ego and desires. Thus anyone who cannot subdue himself and give up his egoistic tendencies cannot reach a path leading him to Allah.

Self-denial means that man should not be a slave to his passions. Instead he should purify his soul from polytheism, jealousy, temptations, fear, disgrace, cruelty and self-indulgence. He should get himself rid of ignorance, skepticism and apathy, and should protect the society from suffocating environment, conceit, fraud, transgressions, high-handedness and from the domination of transgressors and despotic rulers.

The world of today as of the past is facing untold sufferings despite progress and development. It is all due to lack of self-denial. Scholars are increasing day by day but the crimes are not decreasing. The more the number of supporters of human rights is increasing the more the human rights of underdeveloped and weaker nations are being violated. Why is it so? It is because they have poured milk in a dirty utensil. That is to say education is being imparted to the present-day man who has not been purified himself of carnal desires.

Thus after gathering facts and figures it becomes crystal clear that there exists a marked difference between those who have been educated and trained according to the teachings of the Prophets and those who have been

trained and educated under the teachings of secular and ungodly schools of thought.

Therefore, we cannot call every such man the follower of the teachings of the Prophets as has labeled himself a Muslim. Indeed education and training have been the main aim of the Prophets' mission and in a broader perspective this very education and training is the sole factor which distinguishes man from animals.

We see that in the so-called advanced countries who are considered as civilized and cultured nations the people indulge in false propaganda, conspiracies and tall promises in order to catch the votes of their electors in their favor and as such this speaks of their spiritual bankruptcy, which have blemished their reputation. Self-denial, piety and nobility keep man steadfast and firm in weal and woe alike. And it never allows him (according to Imam Ali) to do injustice even to an ant for the purpose of securing power and authority of ruling over the entire world.

8. To Maintain Justice

The Holy Qur'an says:

We sent Our Messengers with clear evidence to support their truthfulness and sent them with the Book and the Balance so that people would maintain justice. (Surah al-Hadid, 57:25)

Prophets were sent for the purpose of reforming the society to the extent that people should do justice among themselves,. They came to mould the society in such a way that people should neither exert pressure on others nor should they yield to pressure, that is according to the Holy Qur'an the people should neither oppress others nor should they bear oppression.

Their aim was to bring about such a nation as according to the Holy Qur'an was moderate and tolerant and did not sacrifice one principle for the sake of other. If it valued the individual freedom it also valued the sanctity of the society as a whole.

If it talked of the benefit of this world it also talked of the good of the other world. Prophets came to reform the nation, whose slogans should not be hollow but meaningful and who weeps but also raises an inspiring slogan, and whose prayers should be accompanied by Zakat (religious tax).

In short, the aim of the Prophets was to establish such a society which had the complexion of Divine influence. The Holy Qur'an says:

We have taken the colouring of Allah; and whose shade is better than Allah 's? Him alone do we worship. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:138)

Any man or society having a Divine outlook will never be influenced by any big power, bloc or any despot or environment with racial bias. To adopt a Divine outlook is to dissociate oneself from Western or Eastern influence.

The reason why our society is not as yet established on justice is that it is still subjected to oppression and cruelties and has not adopted the Divine outlook and we have not as yet prepared ourselves to follow in the footsteps of our Divine guides.

9. Elimination of Unwanted Customs and Dogmas

The Holy Qur'an about the Messenger of Allah says:

He enjoins them to do good and forbid, them to do all that is unlawful; make, lawful for them all that is pure, and unlawful all that is filthy;

removes their burdens and the entanglements in which they are involved. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:157)

The important thing that we find in the Prophets is that they were sent to do away with all the evil practices and customs which were rampant among the people. The above-quoted verse shows that Prophets' obligation was to remove the burdens and restrictions in which the people were deeply entangled.

Thus the Holy Prophet removed all those burdens which prevented the people from performing their essential duties. Now that 1400 years have elapsed since the Holy Qur'an was revealed we find that many people are still bound by many formalities though they do have the Holy Qur'an dearest to their hearts and their notions and formalities prevent them from achieving success and progress, as for example owing to the absence of a particular type of dress people abstain from attending religious functions and seminars or for completing the formalities after the performance of Hajj they absent themselves from attending Islamic conferences.

For the sake of saving themselves from the trouble of undergoing certain formalities they forego their rights and refuse to get the culprit brought to task or for unusual formalities and customs in respect of marriage ceremonies they postpone the very important matter of the solemnization of marriage.

But when the great personality like the Holy Prophet came, he relieved the people from the burden of inhuman dogmas, customs and restrictions. His building a Masjid made of clay and water got such a unique position that it became the centre of attraction and its importance became greater than huge conference halls and impressive buildings, housing the universities etc.

We should ponder over these things calmly. If we enlarge our visual horizon and look to the world at large we shall find that if unnecessary expenditure is curtailed by various countries which are lavishly spending money on formal ceremonies and protocol restrictions and invest this colossal amount of money in financially deficit projects or developmental schemes, the condition of many under-developed countries can be changed and people can be appreciably improved and they can be got rid of many of their hardships.

This can explain the meaning of the phrase "removes their burdens" in its truest sense that is, how the Holy Prophet by his directives saved his followers from difficult responsibilities and similarly the latter phrase "the entanglements in which they are involved" explains the fact that the Holy Prophet removed the shackles of the people one by one and brought about the freedom of thought, speech and action.

It is often seen that the people wish to express their free opinion and want to give vent to their pent-up feelings but they cannot express themselves or put them into writing, and sometimes people do not know the truth of the matter as hirelings hold information from them on account of vested interests. Under such a situation a bold and daring leader appears and starts unfolding the truth, and then freedom of speech is established.

Similarly he makes a statement, which appears in writing. He attacks the tyrants and the people are then relieved of the prevailing fear and then he does the thing which were hitherto considered as impossible.

Prophets-the Warners and Bearers of Glad Tidings

Another achievement of the Prophets is to bring the glad tidings to the people, to cheer them up and to predict the bright future. Indeed man lives on hopes and those schools of thought which have no belief in future and consider their future a nonentity and also consider death as a trifling affair just like the death of an animal.

They consider life to be restricted to an affair of a few years of activity only and the sweetness and joys of life are intercepted with many unpleasant and sour experiences. That is why the number of people suffering from mental depression and spiritual maladies is increasing day by day to the extent that they are resorting to tranquilize their mind by taking intoxicants, liquors and sleeping-pills.

The cult of non-conformist young people characterized by unusual dress and behavior known as hippies and the trampling down of the human values and natural disposition are the result of such a thinking, which is hovering over the society as a canopy of hopelessness and depression. Really, if man is not inspired by good hope and better expectation to live his life or if he thinks of getting destroyed by his death, why does he not try to kill himself sooner than later?

That is to say if we are going to be perished even after sustaining lifelong troubles and grief why should we not try to end our life before that. Suppose if we are spared to live for some more years and we happen to eat about 1000 kilo of foodstuff more or drink a few thousand liters of water more, what will then happen afterwards?

That is a sort of thinking of the materialistic outlook of the Universe and the belief of the people who do not consider themselves to be present before Allah and in whose thought and belief the will of Allah and the concept of eternity, eternal life and Paradise have no meaning.

But in the Divine outlook of Universe its cogent reasoning establishes that man is not a perishable creature, that his future is full of bright prospects and that he is compensated for his deeds, small or big, and further that it does not restrict man's life to a few years of living in this world in which the trials and tribulations are underlined with Allah's Blessings like a silver lining in the dark clouds and it becomes the source of man's progress and development.

Since the Divine outlook of the Universe looks at life with a different angle, the life, therefore, has its own pleasure and thus on the one hand there is a hope for the best, expectations of Divine Blessings and several other benevolent rewards and on the other hand the prospect of attaining the eternity of life along with the blessings of having the proximity of Allah and the eternal abode in Paradise with the pious and devout leaders gives a soul-stirring inspiration and makes us cheerful and contented.

For such a life which man leads there is no fraud and frustration nor is his endeavor for bettering his life a wasteful exercise. Now that we have fully comprehended the real meaning and purpose of life the task of giving

glad tidings to the people rests only with the Prophets and it is one of their achievements.

Similarly one of the duties of the Prophets is to warn the people not to do evil deeds. Fear is the main factor which prevents man from many evil things but it is also necessary that he should be aware of the dangers of the future so that he remains cautious of them.

A child who does not know the dangerous nature of a snake catches it as if it is a cord. It is the duty of the parents, therefore, to tell the child about the venom in the snakes so that he may be aware of the danger.

The Prophets by narrating the stories of the preceding nations warn the people as to how those nations received the wrath of Allah because of their cruelty, polytheism, pride, fraud, apathy, dissension, intimidation, ungratefulness, hopelessness, manslaughter, self-projection, sins and breach of trust.

They warn the people that the wrath of Allah like His Blessings is also a part of Divine law and thus any nation who adopts the path of truth or falsehood will accordingly be paid back in the same coin.

There is no partiality, no favoritism in the treatment of the nations. The deterrent effect that is produced as a result of narration of the stories of the past nations serves as a signal for the people concerns the overall well-being of the nation. Another kind of deterrent effect relates to the person of man about which the Prophets forewarn us.

They warn of the Fire of Hell and give an account of the treatment that will be done to the transgressors before the justice of Allah in presence of the angels. The record of man's deeds will be presented before him in which he will find all the details of his big or small deeds and he will wonder as to what type of record it was which had recorded all his deeds and actions.

The Prophets warn us of the day when we shall have to face the scrutiny of our actions and deeds. On that day man will be prepared to forego everything even his wife and children and all of his possessions in order to escape the Fire of Hell.

Is it not a fact that the fear of Allah's wrath, Fire of Hell, agony and disgrace on the Day of Judgment deter man from committing various crimes and sins? We see that in the Holy Qur'an there are more than 1000 verses about the Day of Judgment as well as innumerable verses about the destruction of the nations of the past.

These verses in fact indicate that man should become cautious of the dangerous consequences that he may suffer on account of his deeds. Hence the society should be fearful of Allah's wrath and save himself from ruination.

Thus the main objective of the Prophets besides bearing the glad tidings of Allah's Mercy and Benevolence and rewards is to warn man of the severe punishment on the Day of the Judgment where he may face torment, disgrace and wrath of Allah.

11. Leading to Light

The Holy Qur'an says:

It is He Who forgives you and His angels pray for you so that He will take you out of darkness into light. Allah is AllMerciful to the Believers. (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:43)

The Prophets were sent to the people so that they might lead the people out of darkness to light, out of ignorance to the light of knowledge, out of dissension to the purity of heart, out of polytheism to monotheism, out of disunity to unity, out of fear to peace and tranquility, out of high-handedness to tolerance, out of blind following to rational following, and out of passionate desires to righteous guidance.

These are the perfect lines which show the duties of the Prophets, but their activities were not confined to these spheres only. Their special duties included their call to the people towards monotheism; battling against various forms of polytheism; delivering the oppressed people to freedom; fighting against superstitions; and above all their inviting the people to do well and forbidding them to do evil.

They warned them of the wrath of Allah and cheered them with His Mercy and Benevolence. These were the achievements of the Prophets. But if we wish to have more information about them we shall have to take the support of the Holy Qur'an and study the facts about them one by one very closely and minutely.

12. Invitation to People

The Holy Qur'an says:

Believers! Listen to Allah and the Messenger when they call you to that which gives you life. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:24

In this verse the commands of the Prophets are referred to as life giving for the individuals and the society. From this it can be made out that before the coming of the Prophets the society was dead. The society had nothing but the following of idolatrous priests; it had nothing but the bearing of hardships; it did not struggle to break the shackles of domination of the oppressors and despots; it indulged in infanticide and considered the birth of a female child as disgraceful and it was lost in superstitions.

To those people who live in a society which is devoid of all moral or civic sense, which has no freedom of thought and which is in fact a dead society a Prophet is sent so that he should call the people towards Allah, should consider an act of right thinking as worship, should make acquiring of knowledge obligatory for every man and woman, should consider the crushing of the tyrants and the redressing of the grievances of the oppressed ones as every man's bounden duty, and should enlighten the people on health care and hygienic principles in respect of hair, teeth, body and dress and should forbid favoritism, nepotism, partiality, chiefdom, feudalism, undue preferences and discretions, hero-worship, undue sympathy, and dependence on oppressors.

Besides that a Prophet inculcates among his people good habits, piety, unity, tolerance, mutual cooperation, right thinking and worship of Allah in place of disunity, misgivings and idol-worship and above all brings about a cultural revolution in conformity with the Divine commands that are revealed upon him, and they are the commands which are free from selfishness, errors, ambiguity and omission.

This revolution which gives life to a dead society cannot be over-estimated. We note that the Holy Qur'an has described the deeds of the Prophets as life-giving and the relevant verse has already been quoted above.

This thing can best be comprehended if we exclude the world of the Prophets and revelations take stock of the dishonesty, crimes, restlessness, misgivings and defects in our society despite the advancement of science and technology.

Telephone was invented but lies are told on it. Airplane was invented but bombs are dropped on cities from it and thousands of houses and human lives are destroyed. If side by side with this progress, faith and piety are not there, it can be nothing but destruction. According to our heritage which we have drawn from the Holy Qur'an, the progress and development that have been made in this world, without the teachings and guidance of the Prophets, will destroy the world itself one day as we see the indications now.

The international organizations, heads of the States, and Super-Powers have not done anything except for their own benefits. They use the power of veto by virtue of which they strengthen colonialism and suppress the down-trodden people of the under-developed countries.

A time will come at last when the deprived and oppressed people will break their connections with them and the world will once again be prepared to accept the Divine leader and Divine commandments. According to our insight the difficult knot of tyranny and injustice will be untied by Imam Mahdi the existing Imam of the Age, whose advent we have been waiting since long and we should accordingly strive hard to lighten our dark nights with sustained efforts.

If we want to acquaint ourselves with the work of a gardener, we should consider the quantity of fruits that the garden yields and the income that is accrued from its sales so that we can estimate the hard toil that has been invested by the gardener.

Similarly we can look to the people who have been trained according to the teachings of the Prophets and assess the value and benefits of their work. This in itself is a long discussion which depends upon the study of the lives of those who have been the true followers of the Prophets.

Nowadays Islam has become the focal point of the entire world and therefore, we should acquaint the world, the East and the West, with ardent and dedicated followers of the Prophets and prepare films on their lives, to be shown to the people through our embassies abroad, symposia should be organized and brochures and pamphlets carrying the salient features of our faith and beliefs should be widely circulated.

Imam Ali Riza said: "If the people get acquainted with our words they will ultimately become our followers".

In another narration we learn that the Holy Imam said to two persons who were present before him: "Whether you go to the East or to the West, you will nowhere find as pure and flawless teachings as are available with our school of learning and thought". (Biharul Anwar, vol. I)

To illustrate it we quote some verses which tell us how we have forgotten the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and how we have been enchanted by alien slogans:

Whatever Allah grants to His Messenger out of the property of the people of the towns, belongs to Allah, the Messenger, the kinsfolk, the orphans, the destitute and wayfarers, so that it does not concentrate in the hands of those who are rich among you. Accept what the Messenger gives you, and refrain from what he forbids you. Have fear of Allah. Allah is severe in His retribution. (Surah al-Hashr, 59 7)

If you do not give up usury which you demand, know that you are in the state of war with Allah and His Messenger. But if you repent, you will have your capital. Oppress none and no one will oppress you. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:279)

Those who obey the commands of their Lord and are steadfast in prayers, and whose affairs are settled by mutual consultation. (Surah ash-Shura, 42:38)

Whichever place you come from, turn towards the Holy Mosque (Ka'ba) and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it so that people may have no cause of argument against you, except the wicked. But do not fear them, fear Me that you may find the right guidance perchance. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:150)

In retribution there is life (and preservation). O men of sense! You may haply take heed for yourselves. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:179)

The hypocrites wait and see. If Allah grants you victory, they say, 'Didn't we help you?' If the unbelievers are victorious, they say, 'Didn't we encourage you not to surrender to the believers and didn't we protect you from them?' Allah will judge among them on the Day of Judgement. He will never help the unbelievers against the believers. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:141)

Do not give the budget of your country and of your possessions in hands of wicked and low persons and to those who in words of the Holy Imam are lustful, drinkers, and gamblers. The Holy Qur'an says:

Do not let the immature waste their possessions. Allah has made you their guardian, so provide them with whatever they need from their property and deal with them in a reasonable way. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:5)

Islam enjoins its followers to remain self-sufficient and to meet their expenses themselves. The Holy Qur'an gives the example of a seedling. It says as follows:

Their likeness in the Taurat and the Injil, is like a seed that sends out stalk, then makes it firm, and it becomes strong and rises straight upon its stem, gladdening the cultivators heart, in order to fill the unbelievers with dismay. Allah has promised, those who believe and do the right, forgiveness and a great reward. (Surah al-Fath, 48:29)

Imam Ja'far Sadiq says: "If you earn your livelihood yourself you will become independent of the stingy wealthy people".

The Holy Qur'an says:

Whoever intercedes for a good purpose will receive his share of the reward but the intercession for an evil purpose only adds more to one's burden. Allah has control over all things. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:85)

Imam Ali says: "O people! From amongst you only he deserves to be the ruler, who possesses moral strength to maintain peace and to carry on a government based on equity and justice; and who has best understood the commandments of Allah". (Sermon 178, Peak of Eloquence)

The Holy Qur'an says:

Mobilize your (defensive) force as much as you can to frighten the enemies of Allah and your own enemies. This also will frighten those, who are behind them whom you do not know, but Allah knows well. For whatever you spend for the cause of Allah, He will give you sufficient recompense with due justice. (Surah al-Anfal, 8:60)

Believers, anyone of you who turns back on his faith should know that Allah will soon raise a people, whom He loves and who love Him, who are humble towards the believers, mighty against the unbelievers, who strive hard for the cause of Allah, and who have no fear o f anyone 's accusations. Such is the favour of Allah which He bestows on whomever He wants. Allah is Munificent and All-Knowing. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:54)

One should be aware of enemy's opinion about oneself as he happens to have his desires. The Holy Qur'an says:

They only want that you relent so that they may come to terms. (Surah al-Qalam, 68: 9)

(Muhammad), if you are among them (your followers during a battle) and you call them for prayers, let a group o f them carry their arms during prayers. After they have made their prostrations let them go back to watch the enemy and let the other group who has not yet prayed join you, carrying their arms with due precaution. (Surah an-Nisa, 4: 102)

The unbelievers wish to find you neglectful of your arms and provisions to attack you unawares. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:118)

The Islamic society should remain very vigilant so as not to fall in the trap of its enemies. The Holy Qur'an says:

When a satanic thought starts to bother the pious ones, they understand and see the light while their devilish brothers would like them to continue in error and would not desist.(Surah al-A'raf, 7:201-202)

The Muslim Ummah should not employ such advisers and experts from amongst the aliens (unbelievers) on national affairs as become aware of the State secrets. The Holy Qur'an aptly says:

Believers, do not make the unbelievers your confidants.(Surah Ale Imran, 3:118)

Do not speak out things which may warn your enemies about you. That is why underground treasures, documentary evidences, past records, military codes etc. are treated as guarded secrets.

When Prophet Yusuf narrated his meaningful dream to his father, Prophet Ya'qub, he advised his son to keep the dream secret lest his brothers should harm him. The Holy Qur'an says:

He said, 'My son, do not tell your dream to your brothers lest they plot against you. Satan is the sworn enemy of man.(Surah Yusuf, 12:5)

When the dream can be given such an importance then matters relating to knowledge and technology are obviously more important and must not be disclosed.

In the Holy Qur'an there are inherent lessons underlined in the verses which have a great import. That is why one of the Prime Ministers of England understood the Holy Qur'an better than we did because he is quoted to have said, "As long as this Qur'an remains with the Muslims, we cannot rule over then)

O dear Brothers and Sisters! Has the time not come yet we should revert to the sacred teachings of the Holy Qur'an?

Have you not been able to recite even one page from the Holy Qur'an still? Do you still not want to know the secrets of its hidden treasure? Have we chalked out our program of life by learning one verse of the Holy Qur'an for every year of our life we have passed?

It would be suffice to mention so much about the performance of the duties and achievements of the Prophets as I am afraid I tried to be as brief as possible.

Friends and Foes of Prophets

It is but natural that anyone who has his high ideals and principles, has his followers as well as opponents. It is not important to have friends or foes but it is important to find out the reasons behind friendship and enmity. Some of the verses of the Holy Qur'an narrate the history of Prophets' supporters and opponents and since acquaintance with these accounts will help to guide our budding generation, we have already discussed this matter in the subject regarding the Prophets' achievements.

The Opponents of the Prophets

(i) The Devils: In the Holy Qur'an the word denoting the Devil has been mentioned eight times. It means the false gods, tyrants and transgressors. This word is used for an individual as well as for group of such persons as transgressors, oppressors etc. One of the main objectives of the Prophets is to fight against these devils. In the Holy Qur'an Allah says to Prophet Musa:

Go to Fir'aun, surely he has become exceedingly rebellious.(Surah Ta Ha, 20:24)

The modern day slogan against colonialism is an incomplete version of this Qur'anic verse. But Prophet Musa in his simple dress goes to Fir'aun and by his forceful speech frightens his courtiers, asks him to liberate the children of Isra'il and stop oppressing them. (Vide: Surah Ta Ha, 20:47)

The most important thing the Prophet said to Fir'aun is that he had no special privileges and merits over others and thus all of them should prostrate themselves before one Allah. But Fir'aun's position was strengthened by his false claim of being the deity, and by oppressing the poor and helpless people with strict monarchial system of administration.

And on the other hand there was Prophet Musa who stood like a rock in his simple and unimpressive dress before Fir'aun's impressive court and in a fearless voice demands the freedom of the children of Isra'il from the bonds of slavery. Naturally Fir'aun and his minions could not remain passive and thus they made a device to crush the Divine leader.

We see that Fir'aun arranged a public meeting and decreed that the magicians from all over the country should assemble at a particular place. He set a reward for that magician who could defeat Prophet Musa.

On a particular day the people of the town came to witness the miracle of Musa and the magical feats of the magicians. First of all the magicians showed their skill by converting the ropes into snakes.

Thereafter, Prophet Musa threw his staff on the ground which turned into a huge snake which devoured the magicians' snakes. The magicians after looking at this spectacle changed their mind and rejected the false godhood of Fir'aun and believed in the true Lord.

Fir'aun after realizing the defeat of his plan, started intimidating and levelling charges against Prophet Musa. Addressing the magicians he said, Musa has been the tutor of you, magicians! Therefore, I cut the hands and feet of all of you. But Fir'aun was oblivious of the fact that a miraculous change had occurred in the mind and soul of these magicians.

Those magicians were now a different people altogether, and no more aspired to receive rewards from Fir'aun. These people were openly ridiculing the high-handedness of Fir'aun.

They were boldly telling him: "O Fir'aun! Whatever oppression and torture we are subjected to, only applies to this world alone. But now we have no temptation of a few coins of yours but we have embarked upon a new world of spiritual enlightenment. We have now embraced the faith in Allah and have now come out of the influence of a small creature like you.

Now we will not prostrate ourselves before you because we have discovered the truth within ourselves. We have now chosen the righteous path, our leader and our Lord". (Vide: Surah Ta Ha, 20:61-73)

This indeed is the revolutionizing spiritual and mental change that we have observed.

In short the devils have always been in the forefront to oppose the teachings of the Prophets and they never spared any effort to commit abominable acts and the throwing of Prophet Ibrahim into the fire was one of such heinous crimes.

(ii) The Affluent People: There was another group of the affluent people who were scared of the teachings and preachings of the Prophets for the sake of retaining their domination and hegemony and they became the enemies of the Prophets. The Holy Qur'an says:

Why were there no men of understanding among the people of the destroyed towns of the past (except for a few, whom we saved from destruction) to prevent people from committing evil in the land ? The unjust among them indulged in worldly pleasures and so became guilty. (Surah Hud, 11:116)

They asked him, Shu'ayb! Do your piety tell you that we must abandon the worship of what our fathers had worshipped and that we must not deal with our properties as we like? We still believe that you are a man of forbearance and understanding. (Surah Hud, 11:87)

Every time we sent a warner to a town, the rich ones therein said to our Messenger: 'We have no faith in what you have brought to us. We are the ones who have more wealth and children and we shall suffer no punishment '.(Surah Saba, 34:34)

When we read the stories about the Prophets as to how the poor people used to come round them and how the wealthy and debauched people used

to oppose them and then we look at the communists who say that Islam is supporter of the well-to-do ones, we are simply amazed.

(iii) Scholars and Intellectuals: Scholars and intellectuals were also in opposition to the Prophets. The Jews and the Christians were among them. The Holy Qur'an says.

Those to whom We have given the Bible, know you (Muhammad) just as well as they know their sons. Yet some of them deliberately conceal the truth. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:146)

The Jews and the Christians knew quite well the truth about the Prophethood of the Prophet of Islam in their heart of hearts as they knew that the prophecy about the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet was made in their sacred Book, the Taur,at but they were afraid of revealing the truth because they thou.ght that they would lose all their interest and would be in a disadvantageous position, and their loss would be irreparable Thus they concealed the truth and committed unpardonable sins. The Holy Qur'an says:

Those who conceal the signs and the guidance that we have revealed, after it has been made clear to everyone in the Bible, will be condemned by Allah and those who have the right to condemn. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:159)

In fact, if in the time of the Holy Prophet, the Jews and the Christians had not concealed the truth about the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet, today they would not have been fighting against Islam.

Why People Opposed the Prophets?

The Holy Qur'an tells many basic things in connection with the opposition of the Prophets. We mention below some causes of their opposition:

(i) Contemporaneous Prejudice: Sometimes man does not agree with another man and argues in support of his non-acceptance of the latter's views, because that man does not give credibility to what another man says as both of them are contemporary and have personal jealousies. But had the same man happened to be in a time about two centuries or so ago people would have accepted his statement as a gospel truth.

Normally the importance of the scholars is not recognized and people do not know them either. If a Pakistani citizen happens to present a scheme or plan for the welfare of the society and if he is not famous among the people, his scheme would not be accepted by anyone.

On the contrary if the same thing is presented by any foreign expert, people will accept it as a very important thing. Similarly some of our teachers or authors quote something of a person who is not very well-known and is alive also they will avoid to mention his name but if a man belonged to the time some centuries ago they will easily mention his name.

When we look into the past history, we note that when Allah made Talut, the commander of an army, people disobeyed him and said, "This man whose position has been very ordinary cannot be deemed fit for leading the troops".

Despite the protest of the Prophet of the time that Talut was pious and possessed all abilities, people ignored him because Talut was just a man among the ordinary persons.

We also note the similar thing in the time of our Holy Prophet. When during his last days he deputed Usama, an eighteen-year-old young man to lead the command of an army, he declared that Allah would curse that person who refused to accept the command of Usama and join his army.

But despite the pronouncement of the Holy Prophet the elderly people who were enjoying good reputation did not agree to accept the command of Usama. This was the pride and rivalry that speaks volumes for contemporaneous rivalry.

A Word to the Readers: Since I do not know you, there is no offence as far as you are concerned. Suppose at this point you set aside the book and for a moment just ponder over that if a contemporary man or anyone who is younger in age or is not well-to-do or is not famous or basically belongs to a different taste or opinion has said a truthful thing or has presented a good proposal, would you accept it easily or with reluctance, or would reject it right away?

In principle, the greatness of a man does not lie in his personality but it lies in his truthfulness. A man's value is recognized only when he places the truth above his personal interest and desires the pleasure of Allah and upholding the truth.

There are many men whom we consider very good and they consider themselves good also but when the time of trial comes and he notices another person as his rival and fears that his popularity and personal interest will be at stake or he becomes the target of people's opposition he becomes unhappy and indulges in destructive activity or feels happy by seeing the disruptive activities against his rival. All this is due to personal rivalry which is natural between contemporary people.

When we look into the Holy Qur'an, we note how this factor of contemporaneous rivalry was the cause of obstruction in the preachings of the Prophets. The Holy Qur'an says:

Are the people astonished that a man who is one of them was commanded by Us to warn them and to bring glad tidings to those who believe? (Surah Yunus, 10:2)

When they see you they take you only in jest: 'Is this the one whom Allah has sent as Messenger?' (Surah Furqan, 25:4)

From both these verses it becomes abundantly clear that people's opposition to the Holy Prophet was simply-because he happened to be one among the common people.

(ii) Pride and Pretension: In the Holy Qur'an there are several verses which mention the various excuses that the people made in opposing the Prophets and we quote a few of them below:

Bring a different Qur'an or make amendments to this one. Say: 'It is not for me to change it of my will. I follow only what is revealed to me' (Surah Yunus, 10:15)

The unbelievers say: 'Why was the whole Qur'an not revealed at once to him'. (Surah Furqan, 25:32)

The infidels did not know the real import of this as the Holy Qur'an was revealed in gradual steps in order to strengthen the hearts and provide explanations as it is mentioned in the following verse:

Why has not a treasure been given to him or a garden from which he could eat? (Surah Furqan, 25:8)

They were quite unaware of the fact that to have a treasure is one thing and to be in the good books of Allah is another thing. The Holy Qur'an in many verses of Surah Tur questions the deniers of the Holy Prophets and frustrates all their excuses in the heart-stirring manner. The Holy Qur'an says:

Does their minds prompt them to say this or is it because they are a rebellious people. (Surah at-Tur, 52:32)

Do they say, 'He has fabricated the Qur'an? In fact, they will never believe. So let them bring a discourse like it if they are true in their claim. (Surah at-Tur, 52:33-34)

Have they been created from nothing or are they themselves their own creators? Have they created the heavens and the earth? In fact, they are certain of nothing(Surah at-Tur 52:35-36)

Do you (Muhammad) demand any wages from them (for your preaching) which they cannot afford ? (Surah at-Tur, 52:40)

Do they have another god besides Allah? He is too exalted for what they associate with Him! (Surah at-Tur, 52:43)

In short, these Qur'anic verses frustrated the excuses of the Prophets' opponents by marking their conscience prick them.

(iii) Unusual Demands: In the Holy Qur'an we read that people used to place impossible demands on their Prophets and that they expected from them the unusual things to happen. The Holy Qur'an says:

These people say, 'After we die, we shall never be raised to life again. Bring back to life our ancestors if you are truthful'. (Surah ad-Dukhan, 44:35-36))

Suppose if these dead were brought back to life then they too would have demanded him to bring back their fathers to life and in that case the Prophets would have to reverse the cycle of Allah's creation. Under the circumstances when one is not unreasonable, a few arguments of the Prophets and a couple of their miracles would suffice to convince them and then they would give up their unreasonable demands.

In some of the verses of the Holy Qur'an we read that a certain group of the Jews and the Christians expressed their desire to the Holy Prophet that the Divine revelation should also come upon them as it was with him. The Holy Qur'an says:

(Muhammad), the people of the Scripture demand of you to make a Book descend on them from the heavens! (Surah an-Nisa, 4:153)

This is a sort of thing as if a patient says that he is not prepared to go to a physician as he wants to be a physician himself no matter even if he may have to die of his ailment.

They had no sense to realize that revelation was not an ordinary thing that could descend on ordinary soul.

The most astonishing thing is that the people had asked Prophet Musa to show Allah in person. The Holy Qur'an says:

However, they asked Musa for things much harder than this by saying, 'Show us Allah in person'. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:153)

The Holy Qur'an says about such unreasonable demands as follows:

Even if We had sent you a transcript on paper which they could feel with their hands, the unbelievers would have said: 'This is nothing but clear sorcery '. (Surah al-An'am, 6:7)

Some of them listen to you but We have veiled their hearts so that they cannot understand, and made them deaf. They disbelieve all the evidence (of Our existence) that they may have seen. They only come to you for the sake of argument and the unbelievers say: 'This is nothing but fables of antiquity'. (Surah al-An'am, 6:25)

(iv) Opposition Due to Indulgence: Sometimes the unbelievers had no excuse to deny the Prophethood of Prophets but they simply opposed them because of their own inordinate desires as the teachings of the Prophets did not approve of such desires. the Holy Qur'an says:

Whenever a Messenger came to them with a message which did not suit their desires, they called some of them imposters and killed others. (Surah al-Ma idah, 5: 70)

Apart from the many reasons of the disbelievers' opposition to the Prophets there was another reason, which was their following the ways of their ancestors. However, after we have known the various reasons for opposition we would now deal with the attitude and behavior of the opponents.

Prophet Musa delivered the people of Bani Isra'il from the oppression and domination of Fir'aun and himself bore the brunt of his attacks and when he deputed Prophet Harun, his brother for a few days to lead them and himself went to Mount Sina (Tur) the people reverted to polytheism and infidelitv, and started worshipping the Calf again.

Prophet Harun who was the brother of Prophet Musa, and himself being the Prophet, was his vicegerant. He pleaded with his people very strongly and yet they turned a deaf ear to his preaching. When Prophet Musa returned and saw his followers worshipping the Calf again, he became very furious and got annoyed with his brother, too

Prophet Harun in his defenee said to his brother, Prophet Musa: "These newly liberated slaves of Fir'aun flouted my instructions and instead of remaining steadfast they weakened me. When I decided to dissuade them from this ignoble act of worshipping the Calf they were about to kill me".

It is true that in every period of history there were people who followed the preachings of the Prophets and the Divine leaders and attained freedom, self-respect and salvation, but after a time for one excuse or another they became violently opposed to their benefactors and started intimidating them and they invented a different line of approach of their own.

Indeed these verses of the Holy Qur'an serve a good lesson for the leaders and reformers as well as for their followers.

The intimidation of the Prophets by these renegades is also found in the lifetime of our Holy Prophet. When at the last moment of his life the Holy Prophet asked for a pen and paper so that he could indite something for the salvation of Muslim Ummah, but his instructions were insolently flouted!

The wish of the Holy Prophet in respect of appointing his successor as the leader of the Muslim Ummah, on the occasion of Ghadir, was so

blatantly disregarded that another man was made his successor. These violations were made in the time of the Holy Prophet himself when Islam had reached the zenith of its fame, glory and power.

If we start enumerating these violations which were against the teachings of the Holy Prophet we shall find that these cannot be counted on finger tips but for them a voluminous book is required.

The Prophets were almost surrounded by their opponents who tried to defeat their mission through indecent acts, inordinate desires, insolent remarks and derisions. By studying the hardships that the Prophets suffered and the struggle that they made, we learn two important lessons as follows.

(i) Man realizes how greatly the Prophets suffered for conveying to us the Divine message and as such they are held in man's highest esteem for their sincerity and dedication to their obligation of Prophethood.

(ii) The followers of the Prophets realize that for the sake of Ummah, the Prophets had to undergo all sorts of troubles and hardships at the hands of the unbelievers and for that patience, steadfastness and determination are needed.

Now whatever has been referred to in the Holy Qur'an is partly reproduced for the benefit of our readers.

We sent Nuh to his people to give them the clear warning that they should not worship anyone besides Allah. Nuh warned them. 'I am afraid that you will suffer the most painful torment'. The disbelievers among his people said, 'We do not believe that you are any better than the rest of us; we see that only the worthless hasty ones, the lowliest among us follow you. Thus, we do not think that you are superior to us, rather you are all liars. (Surah Hud, 11-25-27)

Nuh started to build the Ark but whenever some of his people passed by they would mock him. He in turn would reply, 'Mock us, but just as you mock us we too will mock you. (Surah Hud, 11:38)

They said, 'Shu'ayb, we do not understand much of what you say about, but we know that you are weak among us. Had it not been for our respect of your tribe, we would have stoned you to death; you are not very dear to us.(Surah Hud, 11:91)

We sent Hud to his brethren, the tribe of 'Ad. He told them, 'Worship Allah for He is your only Lord. Will you not become pious?' A group of the unbelievers among his people said, 'You look to us like a fool and we think that you are a liar' He replied, 'My people! I am not a fool but a Messenger of the Lord of the Universe' (Surah A'raf, 7:65-67)

Similar thing was said to Prophet Nuh by his people.

The chiefs of his people said, 'We see you in clear error' He said, 'O my people! There is no error in me, but I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds '. (Surah A'raf, 7:60-61)

Similarly, the Holy Qur'an mentions the conspiracies hatched by the unbelievers of Makkah against our Holy Prophet.

The unbelievers planned to imprison, murder or expel you (Muhammad) from your city. They make evil plans but Allah too plans and Allah's plans are the best. (Surah al-Anfal. 8:30)

Indeed the infidels of Makkah had meted out such a disgustful treatment to the Holy Prophet that some of his own relations had turned against him. It was his blasted uncle, Abu Lahab who was so conspicuous for his evil intentions that wherever the Holy Prophet went, he followed him and disrupted his programmes of inviting the people to Allah.

In the early preaching sessions Abu Lahab used to attend them and created trouble so as to distract people from their listening to the teachings of the Holy Prophet. A usual blame that was put on the Prophets was that of their being a poet, a magician, a lunatic or a sorcerer. The Holy Qur'an says:

We sent Messengers to the past people who lived before you. Every Messenger who came to them was mocked by them. (Surah Hijr, 15:10-11)

We have seen how Fir'aun used his tactics to arouse the feelings of the people against Prophet Musa by impugning his teachings. Sometimes he used to say that Prophet Musa and Prophet Harun wanted to turn the people out of the city and to dispossess them of their land, and sometimes by showing his false glory he used to say that Prophet Musa and Prophet Harun were leading the people to the wrong path by distracting them from their right path.

Sometimes the opposition to the Prophets assumed such a proportion that the people used to plug their ears by inserting their fingers and cover their heads with their garments. The Holy Qur'an says about Prophet Nuh as follows.

Every time I invite them to Your guidance so that You can forgive them, they put their fingers into their ears, cover their heads with their garments, persist in their disbelief and display extreme arrogance. (Surah Nuh, 71: 7)

It was the most disgraceful thing when the opposition to the Prophets was offered by the inmates of their own house. The wives of Prophet Lut and Prophet Nuh who were treacherously disloyal, particularly the wife of Prophet Lut, who used to sneak out information to the unbelievers. The Holy Qur'an has termed these two wretched women as the model of infidelity and treachery and says

Allah has told the disbelievers the incident of the wives of Nuh and Lut as a parable. They were married to two of Our righteous servants but were unfaithful to them. Nothing could protect them from the wrath of Allah and they were told to enter the Fire of Hell with the others. (Surah at-Tahrim, 66:10)

This narration of the Holy Qur'an defeats the ideological concept of some schools of thought who believe that man's mode of thinking and selection of the course of life is influenced by economic factors because we have seen that these two women who were the wives of the Prophets and lived with them and who were maintained by them, chose a different course for themselves and they sided with polytheism.

On the contrary it was the wife of that rebellious Fir'aun who lived in a palace but her anxiety was for the well-being of the hut-dwellers. She was born and brought up in an environment of transgression and despotism but she was strongly opposed to the form of government in power. She was maintained by Fir'aun but she was the supporter of Prophet Musa.

From these instances it is established that despite the fact that economics plays a great part in one's life, it is not the solitary factor which can influence man's course of life. Some people say that if one wants to know as to how a man thinks he should better find out from where he is fed, or they say that the people living in palatial house cannot think of the poor and downtrodden people. These are the slogans which in the light of historical evidence have collapsed and that the cult of ideologies which has given these slogans is doomed to oblivion.

These were some of the details of the disruptive activities of the opponents but it is more regretful that there are some who under the garb of friends do much damage and harm.

Islam has termed those people as hypocrites who never relaxed their efforts in stabbing Islam in the back.

Sufferings of the Followers of the Prophets

We should also not be oblivious of the tortures that were borne by the followers of the Prophets, too. The opponents of the Prophets used to dig big ditches in which they threw the believers and then set them on fire. The Holy Qur'an says:

Accursed are the people who tortured the Believers in ditches by a burning fire while they themselves set around it witnessing what they had done to the believers. The only reason for which they tormented the believers was the latter's belief in Allah, the Majestic and Praiseworthy.(Surah Buruj, 85:4-8)

The sinners indeed laughed at the Believers. When passing by them they would wink at one another. And returning to their people, boast about what they had done. On seeing the believers, they would say, 'These people have gone astray '.(Surah al-Mutaffifin, 83 29-32)

The above-quoted verses describe the mode of thinking as well as the strange behavior of the people of the ancient past. But in the modern times this very attitude can be used to dissuade the believers from the righteous path and to stifle their true belief, but those who have really identified themselves with the righteous people believing in Allah, and who have acknowledged the truthfulness of the Divine commandments and accepted the Divine leaders, and have kept themselves aloof from sins, cannot be daunted by such silly remarks of taunt and scoffing, and cannot in any event forego the right path they have chosen for themselves, because the Holy Qur'an has promised them that a day of Reckoning would soon be coming when the believers would laugh at them. The Holy Qur'an says:

On the Day of Judgement, the believers will laugh at the disbelievers while reclining on couches and reviewing (the bounties given to them).(Surah al-Mutaffifin, 83:34-35)

Thus, even today if the transgressors and the violaters of Divine commands laugh at the believers surely they will be laughed at by the believers while enjoying the bliss of eternal life in Paradise and sitting in reclining couches.

Destructive Activities of the Hypocrites

We have already pointed out that the Prophets not only suffered at the hands of their enemies but they were also subjected to hardships and troubles at the hands of the hypocrites almost to the same degree. The hypocrites were the same people who had built a Masjid in comparison with the Masjid built by the Holy Prophet with a view to making it a hotbed of vice and conspiracy where they could hatch the plans to disunite the Muslims.

You may perhaps have heard that these people had invited the Holy Prophet to perform its inaugural ceremony but the Holy Prophet acceding to their request got that Masjid demolished and burnt to ashes. It was Allah who had informed the Holy Prophet of the evil intentions of the hypocrites, as the Masjid was built with a view to bringing about disunity among the Muslims and of spying on their activities. The Holy Qur'an says about this as follows:

The Masjid which some of the hypocrites have established is only to harm people, to spread disbelief, to create discord among the Believers, to wait for (Abu 'Amir) the one who fought against Allah and His Messenger, and to make others believe that it has been established with their good intentions. But Allah is witness that they are liars. (Surah at-Tauba, 9: 107)

Had they (the hypocrites) wanted to join your army they would have prepared themselves, but Allah did not wish to motivate them, so He caused them to linger behind with those whose joining you in the battle would be of no use. Had they joined you, they would have been of no help to you but would have just caused confusion and trouble among you by sneaking through the ranks where some of you would be ready to listen to them. Allah knows best the unjust. Even prior to this, they tried to cause trouble and to turn your affairs upside-down until the truth came and the cause of Allah triumphed against their desires. (Surah at-Tauba, 9:46-48)

What prevents their offerings from being accepted is their disbelief in Allah and His Messenger, their lack of interest in prayers and their spending for the cause of Allah reluctantly. (Surah at-Tauba, 9:54) 395

They Raised Objections

These hypocrites used to criticize the Holy Prophet for his decisions on financial matters such as distribution of Zakat and taxes. The Holy Qur'an says:

They blame you about the distribution of the welfare funds. They are pleased when you give them something from it, but if they receive nothing, they become angry with you.(Surah at-Tauba, 9:58)

Now we wind up our discussion on the disruptive activities of the enemies of the Prophets and deal with the sacrifices and dedicated spirit of the followers of the distinguished Prophets because knowledge about their dedication and devotion is going to help us in our approach to religion.

Why the Followers of the Prophets Were Sincere?

Quite contrary to the opinion of those who think that the main reason of the believers' inclination towards the Prophets was due to their poor economic conditions and since the Prophets used to fight against oppression,

poverty, deprivation and violation of human rights, these believers supported the Prophets and became their ardent followers.

But this notion is far from the truth. Such an explanation is only given by those who want to conceal the truth as well as to suppress the man's feelings of searching the truth. But from historical evidence we note that there were many people who were not at all financially weak and who were not subjected to any oppression or unexpected happenings, and yet they willingly answered the call of the Prophets, followed their teachings, and adopted the righteous path as guided by them.

Not only that, they even sacrificed their life and property for the cause of the path the Prophets showed to them. We have the instance of Asia, the wife of Fir'aun and Lady Khadija the illustrious wife of our Holy Prophet. Therefore, if anybody says that the embracing of the belief of the Prophets was only for the sake of bread, clothes and personal freedom he is like the one who considers the existence of a nose on his face only for the purpose of the eyeglasses to rest on.

The followers of the Prophets can be divided into two categories:

(i) Those who are unsteady.

(ii) Those who are steadfast.

Unsteady Followers

In Surah al-Baqarah of the Holy Qur'an an event about the children of Isra'il, who were the followers of a Prophet, is narrated. We summarize it below:

After Prophet Musa some people of Bani Isra'il who were subjected to tyrannies and disgrace at the hands of the autocrats and despots, decided to rise in revolt. Therefore, they went to their Prophet Shamuel and asked him for help to have an able ruler.

The Prophet replied, "It is possible that if you are asked to wage Jihad (the Holy War) and to kill the transgressors, you may disobey". At this they assured him of their steadfastness and said, "How can it be possible that we do not take action against those who have driven us from our land, and in whose hands our women and children are in a state of insecurity? We shall fight them and we request you to appoint an able ruler for us".

The Prophet invoked Allah to appoint an able ruler for the nation. His invocation was granted and a man called Talut was referred to the Prophet. He was suitable from the point of view of strength and knowledge and the Prophet introduced him to the people and appointed him their ruler.

But the people who had imperfect wisdom objected to it and said, "This man who has no good mien, and who is not famous either, cannot deserve to be our ruler. And if it is decided that he should be our ruler, we consider ourselves more suitable because we are wealthier than him".

The Prophet pleaded with the people that the appointment of Talut as a ruler had been decided by Allah and that too was because of his physical strength and superior wisdom. But those people did not agree with the Prophet and dissociated themselves from the rest of the people and by this the strength of the fighting people was reduced. It was just a trial which condemned those people who had disobeyed the Prophet.

The second trial was that the ruler told those people who had accepted him as a ruler and leader that they would be given as trial with an ordinary restriction in fighting the tyrant of the time. He said, "You are now approaching a canal and you should not drink water from it, and anyone who drinks it will not be from amongst us.

The greedy glutton cannot be a front line soldier of my army. Of course if at all you drink water, then it should not be more than a handful of water". All those revolutionaries who were fighting against tyrannies, accepted the condition, but when the time for trial came, and they reached the canal, all of them with the exception of a few drank their fill from the canal water.

Here we see again how a group of people again got themselves condemned by violating a small restriction and how the false revolutionaries suffered defeat.

The third trial came at the time when the revolutionaries faced the great army of the opponents, the soldiers got so much frightened that they started shouting that they were not their enemies and they ran away from the army.

Thus another group of people got themselves condemned. But those of the people who had faith in their destinies and had followed the path of Allah and the Prophets did not object to the appointment of the ruler nor did they drink water from the canal, and as they had their firm determination and were not frightened, they fell upon the enemy's forces and a young man, among them, named Dawud defeated the enemy's forces.

Whatever we have narrated above teaches us a great lesson which the Holy Qur'an has mentioned in Surah al-Baqarah 2:247-253. This story distinguishes the true from the false followers, the slogan-mongers from the practical people, and it as well warns that it is not difficult to be revolutionary in name only but to prove it practically is a difficult thing. We have seen that all of those who clamored for victory ultimately failed at the hours of trial.

At Ghadir al-Khum about 100,000 people congratulated the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali on his becoming the leader of the Muslims but two months after, they conveniently forgot all about that. After the assassination of Uthman, the third caliph, people of all tribes and shades of opinion swarmed round Imam Ali and accepted him as their leader, but before long they were divided in different groups against Imam Ali and the Battles of Jamal, Siffin and Naharwan were fought.

The people involved Imam Hasan in a battle against Mu awiya but when the time came they defected from him and joined Mu'awiya's army.

The people of Kufa invited Imam Husayn to help them overthrow the despotic Umayyad dynasty but before he reached there he was martyred at the plains of Karbala.

Even when the Holy Prophet was delivering his Friday Sermon, people left their positions in the congregation after hearing the beating of the drum of the sellers of imported goods.

We also read in the narrations that at the time of the advent of our existing Imam, Imam Mahdi, a group of people will come out from the Masjids to fight against him!

It is an undeniable fact that after the mischief of his jealous brothers, when Prophet Yusuf came out of the well, and after passing hard time in prison he achieved success and honour, he invoked Allah thus: "O Allah! Let me die as a Muslim".

When the merit of a thing is judged by the result then it is not without reason that when Imam Ali heard the prophecy about his martyrdom he did not ask as to who would martyr him, and when he would be martyred? He only asked the Holy Prophet as to whether he would remain steadfast in his faith and religion at the time of receiving the fatal wound from his assassin's sword?

In short, there is a lot of difference between profession and performance, promise and its fulfillment, and claim and its proof.

It is mentioned about twenty times in the Holy Qur'an that unless the people are given a trial their qualities and abilities are never known. From the early period of Islamic history men like Abuzar, Bilal and Maytham underwent untold sufferings and tortures, but they never forsook their faith.

As against them there were people who gave up Islam altogether for fear of oppression and tortures. Dr Muhammad Ibrahim Ayati has enumerated the names of such people in his book The Biography of the Prophet of Islam.

As we have dealt with the disloyal followers of the Prophets, we should better say something about their true followers.

The Loyal Followers of the Prophets

The Holy Qur'an makes mention of the loyal followers of the Prophets and we quote some of its verses below:

The Believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger, who do not change their belief into doubt, and who struggle for the cause of Allah with their property and souls. They are the truthful ones. (Surah Hujurat, 49:15)

Once some Bedouin Arabs came to the Holy Prophet and said: "We have embraced Islam". But Allah in reply sent His revelation as follows:

The Bedouin Arabs have said, 'We are Believers'. Tell them, 'You are not believers, but you should say that you are Muslims. In fact, belief has not entered your hearts'. (Surah al-Hujuratt 49:14)

When the believers are called to Allah and His A1essenger to be judged, their only words are, 'We have listened and obeyed'. They will have everlasting happiness. (Surah an-Nur, 24:51)

In the Battle of Trench when the Holy Prophet with other Muslims was busy in digging the trench some of them left him without his permission but there were some who asked permission from the Holy Prophet. The Holy Qur'an praises such Muslims and says:

The true believers are those who have faith in Allah and His Messenger, and when they are dealing with the Messenger in important matters, they do not go away without his permission. (Muhammad) those who ask your permission believe in Allah and His Messenger. When they ask your leave to attend to their affairs, you may give permission to anyone of them you choose and ask forgiveness for them from Allah. Allah is All-Forgiving and All-Merciful. (Surah an-Nur, 24:62)

(Muhammad), tell them, 'If you love Allah, follow me. Allah will love you and forgive your sins '. Allah is All-Forgiving and All-Merciful. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:31)

Of all men the nearest people to Ibrahim are those who followed him, and then this Prophet (Muhammad) and the true believers. Allah is the guardian o f the true believers.(Surah Ale Imran, 3:68)

Believers, obey Allah, His Messenger and your (qualified) leaders. If you have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgment, refer to Allah and His Messenger about the matters in which you differ. This would be more virtuous and a better way of settling differences. (Surah an-Nisa, 4: 59)

(Muhammad), have you not seen those who think that they have faith in what is revealed to you and to others before you, yet choose to take their affairs to Satan (the despots) for judgment even though they are commanded to deny him. Satan only wishes to lead them astray. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:60)

A dispute arose between two companions of the Holy Prophet on a matter of irrigating the land and they came to him for judgment. The Holy Prophet gave them his decision. The one against whom the decision was pronounced misbehaved shamefully towards the Holy Prophet and questioned the justice of the Prophet in giving the decision in favour of the other party. At this moment the following verse revealed:

Indeed, by your Lord, they will not be considered believers until they let you judge their disputes and find no constraint in their minds about your decisions, and accept them with full acquiescence. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:65)

No believing men and women have any choice in a matter after Allah and His Messenger have decided it. Whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger is in plain error. (Surah al-Ahzab,33:36)

Another sign of the true belief in the Prophets is that besides religious matters we take guidance from the Divine revelations and the Prophets in matters of politics, economics and military affairs. The Holy Qur'an has severely criticized that group of Muslims who spread rumors without consulting the Prophets after receiving any information. The Holy Qur'an says:

When they receive any news of peace or war, they announce it in public. Had they told it to the Messenger or to their (qualified) leaders, they could have used that information more properly. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:83)

This verse is applicable for all times, present and future, as it is a standing order for all Muslims to follow the Holy Prophet, his Holy Progeny, and the qualified religious leaders and guides on matters pertaining to political and military affairs besides religious matters, otherwise people with vested interest would put them on the wrong track.

About the sincere and loyal followers of the Prophets, the Holy Qur'an says again:

The righteous and pious of those who obeyed the call of Allah and His Messenger even after they were wounded (at Uhud) shall indeed have an ample reward. (Surah Ale Imran, 3: 172)

The interesting thing is that despite their self-sacrificing spirit, Allah praises them with a condition that righteousness and piety should be their prerequisite qualifications.

Indeed, in the teachings of Islam if the end does not come in the state of righteousness and piety then all other things such as sacrifice, privilege of being a companion of the Holy Prophet, sufferings, hardships, captivity etc. will be of no avail. These warriors supported the Holy Prophet in a state of piety. The Holy Qur'an says:

Many godly men fought to help the Prophets in the cause of Allah. They did not lose courage, show weakness or give in when facing hardships in their fight for the cause of Allah. Allah loves those who are steadfast. (Surah Ale Imran, 3: 146)

The narrations of the nations of the past and their selfless devotion to the Prophets serves as a beacon light for the coming generations of the Muslims so as to keep them on the right path and to give them consolation in the thought that the narrating of the hardships of the past Prophets to the Holy Prophet was with the purpose of providing consolation to him too. We implore Almighty Allah to count us among the loyal and obedient followers of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

Imamate

Is Imamate Included in the Fundamentals of Faith?

Raghib Isfahani in his book Mufradatul Qur'an has given the meaning of Imam as leader, that is the one who should be followed and obeyed. That one may be a book or a man, whether it or he is right or wrong.

Now that we have understood the meaning of the word Imam we venture to answer the above quoted question. It will be better to quote the verses of the Holy Qur'an as well as the traditions of the Holy Prophet and leave the matter to the readers to decide for themselves.

On the occasion of Ghadir-i Khum the Holy Qur'an addresses the Holy Prophet and says:

O Messenger, declare what is revealed to you from your Lord. If you will not declare, it would be as though you have not conveyed My Message. Allah protects you from men. He does not guide the unbelieving people. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:67)

This should be borne in mind that al-Ma'idah is the last surah that was revealed upon the Holy Prophet in his last days. It should also be borne in mind that the Holy Prophet had been preaching monotheism, prophethood, Day of Judgment, prayers and matters relating to polytheism, iconoclasm, etc.

For a long time and further that the injunctions regarding Jihad, Fasting, khums and zakat were enforced in 2 A.H. and at the time when Surah al-Ma'idah was revealed it was 10 A.H. in which this particular verse was revealed with so much emphasis.

It should again be remembered that the Holy Prophet was not a person who could be daunted or intimidated, else he would have become scared during the early days of his prophethood, when he was all by himself, and not in the last days of his life when he had hundreds and thousands of his followers. This Qur'anic verse tells the Holy Prophet, "Do not be frightened! Allah Protects you ! "

We should also bear in mind that the place where this verse was revealed was the place where the caravans were going to be dispersed towards their respective destinations in different directions. The wind was hot. Those were last days of the life of the Holy Prophet. From this it is proved that the message that he was going to give to the people related to a very important matter and that the Holy Prophet had become aware of the disruptive activities of the hypocrites.

However, from all canons of justice we are constrained to believe that the 67th verse of the Surah al-Ma'idah bore a message of utmost importance and that was regarding the succession of the Holy Prophet and the leadership of an infallible Imam for guiding the Muslim Ummah. Many such notable companions of the Holy Prophet who are held in very high esteem of all the Muslims and are popular among them have narrated this event of Ghadir-i Khum which pertains to the succession of the Holy Prophet.

Imamate is One of the Fundamentals of Faith

1. In the verse of the Holy Qur'an quoted above Allah reminds the Holy Prophet that if he did not make an announcement regarding the appointment

of his successor for the security of the society from the evils of the hypocrites and disruptionists, he would not fully justify his mission of conveying to the people the message of Allah. In view of the strong wording of the relevant verse of Surah al-Ma'idah and his lifelong teachings, we consider the appointment of the successor as an integral factor of religion.

2. There are 29 hadith in Wassa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. I and 17 hadith in Mustadrakul Wasa'il which establish that the basis of Islam rests an a few principles, and the most important among them is that of Wilayat (the succession of the Holy Prophet). We should like to explain this principle.

Imam Muhammad Baqir says: "The basis of Islam depends on Prayers, zakat, hajj, fasting and wilayat". Zurarah, a devoted follower and companion of the Holy Imam asked him, "Out of these fundamental principles which one is most important".

The Holy Imam replied, "Wilayat is the most important of all". Thereafter, he elaborated, "Since succession or mastership is the key to prayers, fasting and hajj, the successor or the vicegerent is supposed to be the leader and guide".

Thus by succession it is meant that the infallible Imam or the vicegerent and successor to the Holy Prophet must be followed and obeyed. In certain narrations Walayat or succession means obedience of the infallible Imam. It is interesting to note that in case of prayers, fasting, hajj and zakat each one is affected by physical or financial reasons but the principle of accepting the authority of the Imam remains intact in all circumstances.

Besides, it can be further explained that the Holy Prophet never before assembled the people at one place nor did he proclaim his message about prayers, hajj, zakat etc. at the top of his voice, but for the purpose of introducing his successor to the people he had to do it at Ghadir-i Khum and had to wait for the people to assemble there on that deserted place, and when all the people had assembled there, he declared the appointment of Imam Ali as his vicegerent and successor.

Leaving aside the fact that the people have forgotten the basic matter, I fully recollect that while performing circumambulation of the Holy Ka'bah I was lost in the thought that the House of Allah served as a maternity home to the esteemed mother of Imam Ali and a cradle to him who demolished the idols at the ceiling of the Holy Ka'bah by mounting on its walls, and threw them down.

Besides, I was also looking at the people who were busy in circumambulating the Holy Ka'bah but what a travesty of fact it was that these people had dislodged the inmate of this cradle and by disowning him were indulging in the formal rite of performing circumambulation.

3. The third argument that can be put forward in support of the importance of Imamate is the famous hadith of the Holy Prophet: "If someone dies without knowing the Imam of his time he dies the death of an ignorant man of the Days of Ignorance prior to Islam".

4. It is stated in the third volume of al-Kafi that if people take the trouble of performing all their obligations without acknowledging the Imam of their time as their guide, their deeds will not be accepted by Allah.

It is just like a man, who without having the representative position of an organization, and without informing it or taking its sanction makes certain purchases for it. In that case he will not deserve any sympathy from the management. Thus in Islam the question of motivation, objectives, course of direction and leadership occupies an extra. ordinary position.

Conclusion: After carefully viewing the four arguments given above the readers can easily make out whether in Islam Imamate is the primary thing or it is secondary. In short, the belief in monotheism will not flourish if the leader of the society is not the infallible guide because monotheism will be taken over by evil forces of the devils and transgressors.

The principles and the teachings of the Prophets and the institution of prophethood will be secure as long as it is protected and safeguarded by the infallible Imam otherwise the Divine laws and commandments will lose their sanctity and innovations, alterations and personal whims and fancies will take their roots and the Divine revelations will lose their credibility.

Besides, the matters relating to the Day of Judgment and its spiritual implications cannot be fully comprehended without the guidance of the Imam. If we apply our commonsense we shall realize that the society without an Imam, will be nothing short of a jungle as it cannot be properly run without a leader, discipline, rules, and regulations.

Thus the leader and the laws are inseparable in any given society. Hence the importance of the role of the Imam as a guide and protector of the social system and its laws cannot be denied.

Direct Link of Imamate with Monotheism

Once when Imam Ali Riza was passing by the city of Nishapur, his followers surrounded him and requested him to narrate a hadith. The Holy Imam narrated the following hadith which he had heard from his father and his father from his grandfather and he from his father in a regular order of son hearing from his father up to the first Imam who heard it from the Holy Prophet and he from the archangel Jibra'il and he from the Almighty Allah"Monotheism is My fortress.

Whoever enters it will be saved from My wrath". The Holy Imam moved forward and then paused and said, "That is, Monotheism with its prerequisites is the Divine fortress and I myself am one of its pre-requisites". (Biharul Anwar, vol. III)

Thus the Holy Imam established an inseparable link between Monotheism and Imamate just as it exists between a motor car and its wheels or between Prayers and ablutions. In other words without the support of Imamate the concept of Monotheism will not be complete. As long as Monotheism is discussed, Imamate will also be referred to in the discussions, and that Imamate will ever remain viable and effective.

Example: If a physician has asked his patient to take either an injection or a capsule, the patient will understand that the injection and the capsule contain the same ingredients and that s why both would be effective in curing the disease. The following hadith has also been quoted in the books of ahadith:

"The Imamate of Ali is a fortress and whoever enters it will be in safety". (Tafsir Nuruth Thaqalayn; Safinatul Bihar)

Now it is worth considering that Monotheism means a fortress and Imamate of Imam Ali also means the same that is; he protection from the wrath of Allah. This is one explanation of the close link between Monotheism and the Imamate.

Thus if we accept the Imamate of Imam Ali it is evident that he will lead us to Allah or if we seek the guidance of Allah, He will direct us to Imam Ali for guidance.

The Need of an Imam

From the same argument, from which we realize the need of a Prophet we also need an Imam. If man had been self-sufficient in seeking the right path, he would never have felt the necessity of the Prophets. We have already dealt with the necessity of the Prophets in our discussions on Prophethood.

Is the Holy Qur'an Not Sufficient?

The Holy Qur'an is such a Book that all Muslims of every sect and belief consider it authentic and everybody selects a few verses of the Holy Qur'an and for the sake of his interest deduces their meanings. Then how can it be said that the Holy Qur'an can be sufficient to lead us to the right path without the Imam? Can a book on medicine help cure the patient without the presence of a physician? Can a certain law be just enough without an authority on it or without the existence of its maker and interpreter?

Can there be any ideology without its preceptor?

Can it be accepted that the purpose of man's creation is to worship Allah and to follow the Divine path, but there will be no necessity of any guide in that respect?

Can it be accepted that in principle man desires to attain the position of higher human qualities but he does not happen to have any ideal before him to follow?

Is it not a fact that for one's inherent desires and aspirations there must exist an external source for their fulfillment?

As for example when we feel thirsty we have an answer in water which is an external source to extinguish our thirst. Similarly, we have the answers of all our internal feelings from external sources. Thus we cannot concede that man has the feeling and desire to attain progress and virtue but there is no external thing in existence which can answer that feeling or satisfy that desire.

How can this be possible that a host invites some people to his home and he does not give them his address or does not send somebody to guide particularly when there are people to mislead him. Thus the host should send a guide with the sign of identification so that he may lead them to the correct destination, and, if the occasion warrants, fight against the mischief-makers, who try to misguide them.

How then can we accept that in matters of world affairs man is dependent on someone to guide him but for spiritual guidance and crossing the Divine path and real progress he may not need a guide especially when his knowledge is limited and he is surrounded by Satanic influences?

Have you ever heard about a society in which its individuals do not have the need of a leader?

Have the bees not appointed one amongst them as their chief called the Queen Bee?

Have you ever heard of any instance in government or in politics, in peace or in war that success was achieved without the existence of a leader or commander? Thus who will accept a wayward society without the guidance of an Imam?

Imam Ali says, "It is a must for a nation to have a guide, whether he is good or bad".

In other words for the eradication of evils the existence of a leader is necessary. We need not go too far into discussing the necessity of having an Imam, because it will amount to trying to prove the existence of the sun or some other thing like that, which is self-evident and does not need proving. Instead we should ponder over the attributes and merits of the Imam and discuss the standard and criterion as basis of the appointment of the Imam.

We should also discuss the question of his appointment or dismissal. We should distinguish a true leader from the false leader. Therefore, we now conclude the discussion on the necessity of the Imam because there is still a lot more to be said on this subject. In short, the question of the necessity of having an Imam is not in dispute as everybody knows that without a leader a healthy society cannot be established.

Everybody knows that for the enforcement of Divine laws and commandments and for their protection, authority and power are needed and to achieve that purpose there must be an able leader. Thus under the circumstances when everybody cannot reach the Holy Prophet and when one has accepted the Holy Prophet as the last Prophet of Islam, the necessity of having an Imam after him cannot be denied.

Can it be possible that Almighty Allah sends His Prophet who through his sincere efforts enforces the Divine commandments in the society and then leaves it without delegating his authority to some capable man to guide the Ummah? It will indeed not be a wise thing. Can the action of the Prophet leaving the Ummah without a guide be compatible with his great concern and devotion to his mission about which we all know?

In fact those who think that the Prophets despite bearing hardships and difficulties for the sake of establishing the religion and law and order among their people left this world without appointing a successor to lead them are in manifest error. They will have to account for their conduct before Allah as they doubted the wisdom of Allah and the sincere devotion of the Prophets to accomplish the task of Prophethood.

In principle, Islam and its teachings should either be compatible with the inner feelings and external conditions and progressive, or alternatively should be left alone in the books so as to be forgotten with the passage of time.

Thus if any school of religious thought possesses a leader with the special attributes of an Imam that will be of the first kind described above that is, viable and progressive otherwise it will be of the second kind that is listless, static and ineffective.

Based on this reasoning Imam Ali Riza said: "By correct leadership religion and its teachings are strengthened and the Islamic society founded by the Imam gives an impetus to Islam in its expansion and development so much so that he fulfils all the individual and collective needs, material as well spiritual of the people". (Safinatul Bihar)

From this narration we note that the Holy Imam has explained to us that without the guidance of an Imam, Islam cannot progress and becomes lifeless and degenerate.

It is a fact that mankind is faced with one or the other problem every day, and if the Islamic society does not seek the help of Allah's commandments, the revelations and the true Imam, people will lose their peace of mind and each one of them will follow his own course and the Islamic society will be in a state of chaos and confusion. Hence the presence of a guide is necessary side by side with the code of teachings.

Is it not necessary to learn swimming from an expert for swimming across the river? Does a man not need a boat to transport him from one bank of the river to the other? Similarly in every walk of life a guide or a leader is needed. Is it not correct that according to the Holy Imams this world is like a deep ocean or a river in spate?

Are not the ahlul bayt and the infallible Imams the Ark of Salvation? Therefore, how can it be possible that Allah creates this world like a stormy river and sees the people drowning in it when there are dangerous animals in it, and does nothing for them? As this is contrary to the Wisdom of Allah, the necessity of an infallible Imam becomes imperative.

How can it be possible that Allah gave the control of human body to the mind so that an eye or an ear or any other organ may not err, and yet for the guidance of a great human society Allah leaves it alone without the guidance of the infallible Imam to solve the people's problems and to lead them to the right path?

The purpose of creating the Universe is that mankind may take benefit. The Holy Qur'an says:

It is He Who created everything on earth for you. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:29)

Allah has made the day and the night, the sun and the moon and all the stars subservient to you by His command. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:12)

Thus man is a superior being among all the creations and the purpose of creation of man is that he should worship Allah, look toward Allah and work for the cause of Allah.

In short, for every material or spiritual function a few things are needed some of which are as follows: The Path, the Means, the Objective and the Guide.

In this context the role of the guide or a leader is the most important one because without the guide we shall forget our path and all our means and objectives will become meaningless. From this it is proved that the Universe is created for us and we have been created to worship Allah and to return to Allah. For journeying towards Allah we need a guide and the guide of that journey is the Imam.

The Conduct of the Imam

Man needs an illustration so that he should know where he is heading to, what actually he is, and what he should be like. Imam is that kind of man like whom every man should be. Imam is an ideal, a specimen or a living example. Without the guidance of an ideal, man will lose his way. If this ideal is not there to lead him to Allah the temporal desires and the Devils will create models for him.

If we do not talk of good and noble things, do not remember our real models, do not keep them in our vision all the time, and do not look to them with highest esteem and love by practically following them, the Devils will distract us and introduce others to us, with false propaganda, so that we may be inclined towards them.

The Holy Qur'an mentions only those things of the personalities which are worthy of being followed by others just as the iconoclasm of Prophet Ibrahim but it does not mention the name of his wife, the number of his children, and their birth and demise.

Imam is not only a guide, he is an Imam. He is not only a guardian, he is an Imam . That is to say, his every action including worship, eating, drinking, struggling, talking and remaining silent, is a lesson and model for us.

Imam gives practical shape to the standing instructions. Imam stresses that Islam is not a whim but it is a reality; it is not a speculation but it is a truth; it is not a name only but it is a practical code of life. Imam with all his special attributes and human qualities is the Imam everywhere, at every place and at every time. Thus we recognize Prophet Ibrahim as an Imam, though not of our time.

Under Imam's Protection: The Holy Qur'an says that on the Day of Judgement each group will be called with its Imam:

On the day when We call every nation with their leaders. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:71)

Punishment Doubly Awarded: The Holy Qur'an addressed the wives of the Holy Prophet saying that if anyone of them committed any wrong she would be awarded a double punishment. It says:

Wives of the Prophet! If anyone among you commits indecency, her torment will be double. (Surah al-Ahzab, 33:30)

In fact, the wife of the Holy Prophet is supposed to be a model for the people and as such she should prove herself to be a guide to others, not to speak of committing sin herself.

A tradition says that before the remission of one sin of a scholar seventy sins of an ignorant person will be remitted. (Usul Kafi; Kitab: fazlul 'ilm)

Since a scholar is supposed to set an example to others by his deeds, his minor shortcoming is considered to be great.

Some of our scholars say that if a scholar or a wise man commits even a minor sin, it is regarded as a major sin because his deeds have a direct influence on others. Accordingly the sin or the innovation made by those who are supposed to be the leader of the society is several times greater than that of an ordinary person. This is due to the fact that people start following a corrupt Imam.

An Interesting Narration: Some people asked Imam Ali Naqi as to why Imam Ali used to spare the wounded ones in the Battle of Jamal but in the Battle of Siffin he used to kill even the wounded ones? The Holy Imam explained that in Siffin its leader or commander was alive. The wounded ones used to flock round him.

The enemy reinforced the army, encouraged the weaker ones and attended upon the wounded with consoling words, and above all the root of the discord was still in their minds to gain strength and thus in order to wipe out the total menace it was better to kill all of them.

But in case of the Battle of Jamal, Talha and Zubayr had been killed already, and after the camel of Ayesha had sat down, those who were fleeing were not pursued, and since they had no refuge they were spared their lives. (Tuhaful 'Uqul, p. 508)

From this example it can be fully understood that what a great role a leader has to play against the forces of evil and how differently he acts in varying circumstances.

The Remembrance of the Imam: The great influence of the expansionists lies in their attempt to distract our people from our ideal Imams and to mislead our younger generation through brain-washing and talking merits of other people. It is for this reason that the ziyarat (homage) to the Imam is necessary so that by presenting oneself before him one may be able to discover his faults and deficiencies.

The reason for organizing the mourning ceremonies on the martyrdom of Imam Husayn is the same so that one may be able to revive in his memory the great sacrifice the Holy Imam made for keeping Islam alive and hear the facts about the Holy Imam's patience and steadfastness in his hour of trial, and finally to apply himself to follow the Imam in his day to day life and adopt better way of life and die an honorable death.

The Stress on the Meaning of Imam

The word "Imam" has very interesting meanings. It is so splendid and heartening that no other word such as 'teacher', 'patron', 'leader', 'preacher' and 'sermonizer' has such a wide meaning as the word 'Imam' has, as all these words connote teaching and training but not carrying a movement. But an Imam is one who moves himself with his deed and action and makes others follow him.

An Example of Imam's Conduct: It is narrated of a battle that Caliph Umar wanted to go to the battlefield himself but the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali advised him not to do so. The Holy Imam explained that as he was the Caliph the enemy would be justified to think that the Muslim army had lost strength and that was why the Caliph himself had to come to the battlefield and thus whatever force or strength was left with them had been brought there in the person of their Caliph.

In that way the feeling of awe that they had of their army would be diminished.

On the Day of the Judgement the sceptics would say to their leaders that if they had been left to themselves they would have not come to that pass and by natural inclinations would certainly have turned believers. The Holy Qur'an says:

The oppressed among them will say to their oppressors, had it not been for you we would certainly have been believers.(Surah as-Saba, 34:31)

The Holy Qur'an calls upon the Muslims to make the leaders and commanders of the infidels their target in battle and Jihad, that is to fight against the leaders of the infidels; it says:

Fight against the leaders of the unbelievers if they violate their pledge and revile your faith, to force them to stop their aggression against you. (Surah at-Tawba, 9:12)

We read similar pronouncements of our Imams that people do not become as much influenced by their parents as they do by their leaders.

Imam Ali said: "People are as much influenced by their rulers as they are by their parents".

Similarly, we read another well-known saying: "People follow the religion of their kings".

The Holy Prophet said: "When two groups of my followers go astray the whole Ummah will go astray, and when they become virtuous and noble they would influence all others and then all will become noble and virtuous". The two groups referred to in this tradition are the rulers and the jurists. (Bihar Anwar)

Hence, the importance of the conduct of a leader and its influencing force becomes quite evident.

The Role of Imam in Hadith

Imam Muhammad Baqir says: "Any group of people who accepts a tyrant ruler will face the wrath of Allah even if it happens to be pious. On the contrary those, who accept a just Imam appointed by Allah, deserve His forgiveness and mercy even if they happen to be of bad conduct". (al-Kafi, vol. I.)

From this important tradition it is proved that the thing which is more important than deeds is the method and the path. Suppose a driver who is experienced, wise, and healthy will drive his bus safely to its destination irrespective of the fact that some of the passengers have thrown peels of oranges and bits of cigarettes in the bus and are in dirty clothes with torn shoes etc.

If the bus driver happens to be a blind or insane person then the passengers of the bus despite wearing good clothes and shoes will be heading towards disaster. Thus in any journey the importance is of the leader who leads one to the destination. The Holy Qur'an says:

Who strays more than one who follows his lust without guidance from Allah. (Surah al-Qasas, 28:50)

In the context of this verse we come across a tradition which says: "Whoever adopts his religion according to his own inclination and opinion and does not follow a true Imam, according to this verse is a misguided person". (al-Mizan, vol. XVI, p. 56)

Another tradition says: "One, who worships much, but does not follow a true Imam, is certainly a misguided person, and Allah does not accept his worship". (al-Kafi, vol. I.)

The Purpose of Imamate and Leadership

In the eyes of Islam, world, wealth, status, authority and the government are the means and not the end. That is the reason why the devotees of Allah, who assume some authority do not give up leading a simple life nor do they become self-conceited, arrogant and proud. The Holy Qur'an says:

It is the life of Hereafter which We have prepared for those who do not want to be haughty in the land nor do they spread corruption. (Surah al-Qasas, 28:83)

Ibn Abbas says: "Once when I visited Imam Ali, he was mending his shoes. The Holy Imam asked me, 'What do you think will be the price of this shoe?' I said, 'It has no value at all'. The Holy Imam then said, 'By Allah! To my mind this torn shoe is more valuable than my ruling over the people provided I enforce truthfulness and eradicate the untruth".

Indeed, Imamate and leadership are not for comfort and luxuries but they are meant for delivering the people from polytheism, tyrannies, ignorance and dissensions and not for enabling the leader to lead a life of comfort and selfishness. The purpose of acquiring authority by the infallible Imams was to enforce the Divine commandments.

In Islam Imamate is not a secondary thing but it is an important responsibility. It is not a bed of roses but it carries a heavy burden of responsibilities. Thus the Imams used to lead a very simple life. At times of need they used to go to the court like ordinary citizens. They used to earn their own livelihood and never accepted any favor or concessions.

Imam Ali in one of his letters wrote to Ibn Abbas: "Do not amass wealth because of the authority of ruling the people that you have got. It is not fair for you to take wrong advantage of the position you are holding and oppress your enemies and the opponents. Your article of faith should be to institute truth and keep it alive and eradicate the evil". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XL, p. 328)

When Imam Ali after assuming the authority of ruling over the people visited a city, he said, "I have come down to your city in my old dress, with this asset and this horse. If after a few days you find that I depart from your city in different clothes you should conclude that I misappropriated the public property". (Biharul Anwar, vol IX, p. 500)

On another occasion Imam Ali said: "I swear by the Creator of this Universe that had they not sworn unconditional allegiance to me; had they not manifested profound gratitude for my accepting their rulership; had not the presence of helpers and supporters made it incumbent upon me to defend the faith; and had Allah, the Almighty not taken a promise from the learned to put a check upon the luxurious and vicious lives of Oppressors and tyrants as well as to try to reduce the pangs of poverty and starvation of the oppressed and downtrodden, and had He not made it incumbent upon them to secure back the usurped rights of the weak from the mighty and powerful oppressors, I would even now have left the rulership of this State as I did earlier and would have allowed it to sink into anarchy and chaos. Then you would have seen that in my view the glamour of a vicious life of your world is no better than the sneezing of a goat". (Sermon 7, Peak of Eloquence)

Imam Ali further says: "Almighty Allah by entrusting your affairs to me has given me right over you. And as I have a right over you, so you too have

a right over me. This incumbency between us is mutual". (Sermon 221, Peak of Eloquence)

From this we have now understood that the aim of rulership is not comfort and luxuries otherwise Imam Ali for passing his day to day life would not have been constrained to sell his sword and say, "By Allah! Had I some money to spend over buying simple clothes for me I would have not sold my sword".

Similarly, when Imam Ali Riza was the heir-apparent in Mamun's time he used to sleep on a jute mat and sit with his slaves par taking the meals together. And Prophet Sulayman despite his exalted position of being the Prophet of Allah lived with the poor and loved them too". (al-Hayat)

The Signs and the Attributes of the Imam

Since the leadership of the Ummah, i.e. the Imamate is of paramount importance and since the people are likely to fall under the trap of false leaders, the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet have shown the signs of an Imam who can guide mankind to distinguish between a straight path and a ditch. Here we enumerate such signs very briefly:

1. A beggar entered the Masjid of the Holy Prophet and asked the people for alms, but the people paid no attention to him. After all the beggar said, "O Allah! Be a witness to this. These people have disappointed me". Imam Ali was offering his prayers and was in the bowing posture. He stretched his hand and the beggar came forward in front of him. The Holy Imam gave away the ring to the beggar. At this moment the following Qur'anic verse was revealed:

Only Allah, His Messenger and the true believers who are steadfast in prayers and pay alms while they kneel down during prayers, are your guardians. (Surah Ma'idah, 5:55)

That was the sign by which the people fully understood that the guardian who is referred to in the revelation besides Allah and His Holy Prophet was none except Imam Ali. There is no doubt about it that before this incident, the exalted position of Imam Ali had already been fully shown to all concerned, but the reference with regard to the incident of giving away alms in prayers was pointedly a sign of Imam Ali's Imamate and guardianship that after Allah and His Holy Prophet he had the exalted position of the guardianship and patronage of the entire Ummah, otherwise mere giving away of the ring in bowing posture during prayers cannot be a sign of Imamate and guardianship without a direct reference being made through Divine revelation.

Example: If you send somebody to your home to fetch the key of the store from your wife, and for the satisfaction of your wife you tell him a sign that he should tell her that you have decided the previous night to give some money to such and such person so that your wife could take it as a sign of genuineness of the message.

Just think it over that fetching a key from one's wife through a messenger, and message regarding the decision of helping somebody by money, has no relevancy. The giving away of the ring in prayer is also like this as it was used to serve as a sign of the Imam because only giving away

something in alms does not ordinarily make anyone exalted in the eyes of Allah.

The Imamate of Imam Ali had already been established but this incident was only to emphasize it as a sign from Allah.

2. The Holy Prophet got himself busy for 23 years in his mission of Prophethood. Each year has 365 days and the total number of days involved in preaching comes out at 8395.

The following revelation was made in the Holy Qur'an:

Today the unbelievers have lost all hope about your religion. On this day I have perfected your religion. Completed My favours to you. And have chosen Islam as your religion. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:3)

You just glance over these thousands of days of the Holy Prophet's mission and find out only one single day to which the above-mentioned revelation aptly applies. It is certain that all days were not alike but of course one out of such days will be the special day of utmost importance. We, therefore, review the days so as to mark that special day.

(i) Was this day the first day of the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet? No, because on that day neither the unbelievers had become disappointed nor the religion was completed. Therefore, it cannot be that special day.

(ii) Was that the day when the Holy Prophet was asked to preach openly after three years of preaching in secrecy? No, this cannot be that special day because that day was the beginning of preaching of Islam and it had not reached the stage of completion.

(iii) Was that the day of migration of the Holy Prophet from Makkah to Madina or was it a day of the birth of Fatima the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet or the day of victory at Badr? No, because after the migration and the birth of Lady Fatimatuz Zahra and the victory of the Battle of Badr the Qur'anic revelation were made on the Holy Prophet for several years and therefore none of these days can be regarded as a day when religion was completed.

(iv) Was that the day about which Allah has specified four special distinctions i.e. the day of the Conquest of Makkah in 8 A.H. or the day of granting concessions to the unbelieving pilgrims? No, it is not so, because on the day of the conquest of Makkah only the unbelievers of Makkah had become disappointed and not all the unbelievers, and further that from 8 A.H. to 10 A.H. until the demise of the Holy Prophet (in these two years) several verses were revealed and commandments were made and, therefore, no day of the year of 8 A.H. can be considered as the day of the completion of religion or favors.

(v) Is it possible that that day was the day of 'Arafa' (the day preceding the day of performing hajj) when the Holy Prophet was busy in performing the rites of pilgrimage? No, it is not so, because the performance of the rites of pilgrimage by the Holy Prophet was a part of religion and not the entire religion but the Holy Qur'an says on that day when the religion was completed.

In short if we continue our search to know that day we find that that was the Day of Ghadir-i Khum which falls on the 18th of Zilhajja. That year was the last year of the life of the Holy Prophet when he with thousands of

Muslims performed the rites of hajj and before returning to Madina when he arrived at a point from where people were to disperse to different directions to their respective destinations (Yemen, Madina, Iraq and Abyssinia etc.).

That was the place of Ghadir, where the commandment regarding the appointment of Imam Ali as the Imam and the successor to the Holy Prophet came from Allah. Then the Holy Prophet with special attention and arrangement according to the command of Allah, appointed Imam Ali as the Imam for the guidance of the Ummah.

1. On that day the unbelievers lost all hope as on that day their allegations against the Holy Prophet (being the poet, the magician or the insane) were falsified. The Battles of Badr, Khaybar, and Trench etc. had all been finished and all conspiracies and intrigues had been nullified.

But the unbelievers only hope rested on the day of the demise of the Holy Prophet because they had calculated at their own that since the Holy Prophet had grown old and had no son to succeed him either, nor had he appointed a successor, the forceful impact of Islam would diminish but when they saw on the day of Ghadir that a person by the name of Ali who was ablest of all had been appointed as a successor to the Holy Prophet, it frustrated all their hopes. Thus on that day the unbelievers had become disappointed.

2. It was the day when religion was brought to completion, when with the laws and commandments, the appointment of the ruler was settled when with the laws its enforcer had been appointed; when with the plan the model was also introduced; and when the leader for expanding the Islamic movement had been appointed. The Holy Qur'an says:

On this day I have perfected your religion. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:3)

Hence the above-mentioned verse means the religion cannot be considered to be complete without the appointment of the leader.

3. On that day when Allah said: I have completed My favours to you. But in truth all the favours will be of no avail if the favour of having the leadership of the Imam is denied by the people because it is the Imam who by his guidance and teaching enables the people to make use of the Divine favours. It means that refusing to accept the leadership of Imam nullifies all other favours.

In clear terms it means today when you have got an able ruler and guide who will enforce the Divine commandments and when in all respects Islam has been perfected, I have chosen Islam as your religion.

We have seen that how the Holy Qur'an in its unique style has described the thing which people read every day about the importance of the day which is applied only on one particular day of the entire period of the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet.

Since we are writing it in brief we conclude this topic here. We should now like to trace the circumstances pertaining to the endeavors of the Holy Prophet to indicate the importance of the leadership and Imamate.

The Holy Prophet's Endeavours

The Holy Prophet right from the beginning of his Prophethood had introduced his successor. When on the first day of the preaching the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

Warn your nearest relations. (Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26:214)

When this verse was revealed and Allah commanded him to warn his near relations, the Holy Prophet arranged a feast and invited all his relatives he said to them, "I do not know of any person who may have brought for his nation anything better than what I have brought for you. Allah has commanded me to invite you to Him. Who amongst you is there to help me in my mission and be my brother, successor, and vicegerent?" (Tarikh Abul Fida, vol. I, p. 116)

It was Imam Ali who stood up every time to support the Holy Prophet while all others remained defiant.

The Holy Prophet time and again spoke about Imam Ali. On the occasion of the Battle of Tabuk, he deputed him as his successor and said to him, "O Ali! You are to me as Prophet Musa was to Harun". (Sahih Bukhari and Tafsir Namuna, vol. VI)

The Holy Prophet urged the people how they should treat his beloved daughter, Lady Fatima after him and said: "The support of Fatima of a man is the proof of his truthfulness".

Sometimes the Holy Prophet made Abuzar a standard and said: "His tongue is pious and his words are truthful. It means, "O People! Find out with whom Abuzar sides in the matter of guardianship and Imamate".

Sometimes he said to Ammar Yasir, "O Ammar! Those, who persecute and kill you, will belong to the group of rebels". This remark was a direct hit on Mu'awiya because when in the Battle of Siffin Ammar Yasir was martyred at the hands of Mu'awiya's troops, the people at once recollected the prophecy of the Holy Prophet which he made about Ammar Yasir and realized that his killers were oppressors and rebels and believed that Mu'awiya's claim was false and thus they dissociated themselves from Mu'awiya's forces.

Therefore, Mu'awiya on the advice of Amr bin 'As cleverly started giving a different interpretation to the Holy Prophet's prophecy about Ammar Yasir and adopted means to counteract the indiscipline and chaos prevailing in his army.

Sometimes the Holy Prophet through figures of speech drew the attention of the people to the guidance of the infallible ahlul bayt as for example likening the ahlul bayt to the Ark of Prophet Nuh, he said, "My ahlul bayt are like the Ark of Prophet Nuh; whoever boarded it were saved and the infidels who did not embrace the faith and did not board the Ark were drowned". (al-Ghadir, vol. II, p. 301)

Sometimes the Holy Prophet spoke of the infallibility and high virtues of the infallible Imams and reminded the people about their wisdom and leadership by saying, "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate". (Tafsir Burhan, vol. I, p. 191)

Even up to the last days of his life the Holy Prophet did not give up his endeavors as he asked for the pen and paper so that he might write something for the Ummah but alas! he was given such a reply which was against all manner of etiquette, religion, and the Holy Qur'an, and the very people who thought they deserved the reins of caliphate prevented the Holy Prophet from writing down something on a piece of paper as they put an excuse that the "man" was in a state of delirium because of his acute illness

and said, "innar rajula la yahjur" (The man is talking nonsense) Allah forbid! Would that these people had known that the Almighty Allah said about His Prophet that he never spoke anything out of his desire. The Holy Qur'an says:

He does not speak out of his own desires. It is a revelation which has been revealed to him. (Surah an-Najm, 53:3, 4)

Well, it was our intention to emphasize that the Holy Prophet made every endeavor to guide his followers and to make arrangement for Imamate. On the first day also he invited the people to realize that anyone who helped him in his mission of Prophethood would become his vicegerent and Imam and on the last days of his life also he asked for pen and paper, and on the day of Ghadir Khum also by giving the signs that to whom his loving daughter Lady Fatima Zahra, great men like Abuzar and Ammar Yasir approved would be the Imam.

In short the Holy Prophet spared no effort from his side but it is an irony of fate that the very wishes of the Holy Prophet were flagrantly flouted. Let Allah, Almighty punish those who from the very beginning sabotaged the interest of the Imamate and the guidance of the Ummah.

A Question: Why despite all the high virtues, abilities and attributes and support of the Holy Prophet, the people overlooked Imam Ali for a long period?

Answer: The flouting of the Divine commands is not a new thing. The Holy Qur'an has taught us to be pious and trustworthy and yet piety and trustworthiness are very rare. And why did Satan not prostrate himself before Adam? Did not the followers of Prophet Musa after he went out of sight and lost contact with them, go astray?

Forgetfulness and indifference are human weaknesses. Of course only those who build up their own character and by self-discipline make themselves deserving of Allah's kindness are the exceptions. Besides, old feuds and enmity which the people were harboring against Imam Ali became the cause of people's refusal to accept him as their Imam.

Those of the people who got killed in the Battles of Badr, Uhud, Khayber and Hunayn belonged to one or the other tribes so how could their relatives be prepared to accept him as their Imam, who had killed their people. Another reason of people's refusal to accept Imam Ali as the Imam or renouncing after once accepting him as the Imam was the question of the Holy Imam's justice and concept of good conduct.

This fact becomes quite clear when we see the people, who had severed their allegiance to him but after the assassination of Uthman had gathered round the Holy Imam, and those very people again broke their allegiance to the Imam and triggered off the Battle of Jamal against him. These people had great hopes of receiving extraordinary benefits, financial and social, but when they saw that the Holy Imam was not partial to anybody in any matter, they got disappointed.

Besides, when some selfish and notable people suggested to the Holy Imam that they should be consulted by him in the State affairs, he replied that in any matter in which he would not find any express command of

Allah and His Prophet, he would no doubt consult the people, and they would be included among them.

In short, these people had their own interest before them and they found that the Holy Imam was very strict in safeguarding the property of the poor people so much so that he was not going to spill even a drop of milk to go waste and was not prepared to pay any heed to their unreasonable demand; hence they turned hostile to him.

One another reason of the people's turning against Imam Ali was his strict justice and acute observation. Of course, an Imam who does not spare a single public property to be misused or usurped by anyone and instead would retrieve it back to public treasury, would not be popular among the people, who are mostly evil-minded and hence they would go against him.

However, the people did not abide by the wish of the Holy Prophet, overlooked the Divine appointment of the Imam and altered for themselves the method of guidance and rulership.

These people, of course will be answerable before Allah as they fall under the category of the people within the meaning of the following Qur'anic revelation:

And as for those who speak ill of the Messenger of Allah will face a painful punishment. (Surah at-Tauba, 9:61)

What would be a greater sin than to ignore the bequest of the Holy Prophet?

Expression of Truth and Endeavors for it

Besides the expression of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet Imam Ali himself on several occasions made a clear statement of his truthfulness, abilities and qualities as for example it is in his sermon in Nahjul Balaghah that when a fellow asked the Holy Imam as to how much ambitions he had of ruling the people, he replied that he only demanded that much of his right which was only his. He says: "By Allah, that man snatched the caliphate as if it was an insignia, which could be put on by him; though he knew very well that I was as indispensable to the caliphate as the pivot to the grindstone (upon which its revolving depend).

The eminence of my position among those men was such that I was like a fountainhead from which wisdom flowed and nobody could aspire to rise to the heights of my knowledge. But I was forced to bear this usurpation and turn my face away from the calamity; I was in serious straits.

There were two alternatives before me: either to fight for my rights without the help of supporters, or to patiently endure the bereavement; the endurance was going to be of such a sad and long duration that during this period young men would become old, the old would lose their vitalities and the faithful would end their days unsuccessfully trying to improve the situation". (Sermon 7,Peak of Eloquence)

In that way the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali explains to the people about the position of the Imam and the Divine guidance.

Some Attributes of the Imam

I fail to understand from where I should begin and what I should write on this important subject. After having gone through the narrations about the attributes of the Imam I am simply wonder struck. Apart from this my esteemed readers also would not bear it, if I may dwell upon the subject in detail. But it is the wish of everybody to get himself acquainted with some of the attributes of the Imam and I too have decided to describe some of the attributes of Imam.

(i) Imam Must be Infallible: Infallibility does not mean that one does not commit any sin but it means that one should not even conceive of committing a sin.

We are saved from committing many sins and in other words we are in a state of infallibility, that is neither we have committed any sin nor have we conceived of committing it, e.g. the sin of going nude in the streets, the sin of committing suicide, the sin of killing somebody etc. Therefore, we do have knowledge of many sins but we never think of committing them. Similarly, Imam because of his immense knowledge and faith has the knowledge of all sins but their attitude not towards one or a few but towards all of them is such that they do not even think of them.

(ii) Large-heartedness: Strong soul and large-heartedness are the means of rulership. Narrow-mindedness, irritable temperament and hastiness are not good for running the administration of a society or a State or for leading and guiding the people to progress and prosperity.

When Allah selected Prophet Musa for the guidance of the people, he asked for a few things from Him, the first one among them was high courage, self-control and magnanimity. The Holy Qur'an says:

He said, O my Lord! Enlarge my breast for me. And make my mission easy to me. (Surah Ta Ha, 20:25-26)

And it is about our Holy Prophet that when the believers wanted to avenge tortures given by the unbelievers, he did not give them permission and instead said, "Today is the day of mercy not of revenge".

And it is about Imam Hasan who after hearing the highly insolent and despicable remark of a syrian about him said: "Why have you become so angry with me? If you need money I will make you happy with enormous money. If you need a house, I will provide you a house". The Holy Imam treated him so politely that the fellow became ashamed of his behaviour and finally confessed by saying, "It is Allah's secret as to whom He makes the Imam and the leader".

(iii) Justice: When all the people expect justice, Imam should be the emblem of justice. Let us go back to the life of Imam Ali for a while, and have a glimpse of his justice. We have already mentioned many interesting incidents in our discussions on social justice. However, we will simply mention one or two examples of the words and deeds of the Holy Imam:

• Imam Ali in a letter to one of his officials warned him thus: "If I heard that you misappropriated the public treasury, by Allah I will deal with you severely". (Letter 20, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1 984)

• Regarding the policy matter of the State, Imam Ali wrote to Malik Ashtar: "The share for the far-flung areas should be the same as for the nearby ones". (Letter 53, Peak of Eloquence)

• About his assassin, Ibn Muljam, Imam Ali said, 'Do not kill anyone other than my assassin". He further went on to say, "And that you should do it by one stroke only as he did in my case and thus do not exceed the limit of justice". (Letter 47,Peak of Eloquence)

• In the case of flogging a culprit when Qambar awarded him three extra lashes in addition to the prescribed number of lashes, Imam Ali whipped Qambar with three lashes as in this case he did not show any leniency or favour because of Qambar being very much attached to the Holy Imam in devotion, service and regards. (Qisarul Jumal, vol. II, p. 21)

• Imam Ali said, "By Allah, if all the seven continents with all that they contain are offered to me as a remuneration or bribe for depriving an ant of the husk of a grain of barley carried by it, I will never do it". (Sermon 228, Peak of Eloquence)

• In another incident when the Holy Imam heard that non Muslim woman was unjustly deprived of her ornaments and no usual protection was given to her, he became so annoyed that he said that for this shameless act if a Muslim dies he would not mind it.

An Incident: Once the people asked a preacher to say something on the attributes of Imam Ali. He mounted the pulpit and said, "Imam Ali was a man of knowledge and wisdom". He paused and then heaved a sigh and said, "Ali was pious". He sighed again and said. 'He was brave and worshipped Allah".

He again sighed, and came down from the pulpit. People asked him, "It was not a speech at all" He replied, "The position of Imam Ali is highly exalted. I do not possess enough knowledge and time, and, therefore, I thought that there was nothing better than that I should heave a sigh, give the hints, and then retire". We are also giving passing reference only.

Imam Should Subdue His Passions: Imam Ali says: "What a bad thing it would be if my passions overcome me and distract me from the path of truthfulness and justice!" (Biharul Anwar, vol. XXV, p. 164)

Imam Ja'far Sadiq narrates from the authority of Imam Ali: "There are many conditions for Imamate and one out of them is that temporal and worldly affairs do not engage the Imam's attention".

Imam Should be Brave: Imam Ali says: "No battle has ever frightened me nor has it influenced me". (Peak of Eloquence)

Imam Ja'far Sadiq narrates from the authority of Imam Ali. "The Imam should be the bravest of the brave". (Biharul Anwar)

Another narration says: "Imam should not be timid". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XXV, p. 172)

The question of death and martyrdom should be quite apparent to the Imam. Imam Ali says: "By Allah! I have such fondness for death as an infant has for its mother's breast".448

Imam Should be Perfect Par Excellence: Imam Ali in his letter to Mu'awiya writes, "O Mu'awiya! Were you ever entrusted with the noble status of administering justice to, and ruling over mankind? Have you the necessary knowledge for that work? Do you really know the canons of equity and justice as laid down by Islam. May Allah protect and withhold me from behaving towards mankind the way you have behaved and from

tyranny, exploitation, and murders that you commit". (Letter 10, Peak of Eloquence)

Some Other Attributes of the Imam

(i) Acts According to the Holy Qur'an: The Imam should act and pass judgements according to the Holy Qur'an. Imam Ali says: "I swear by my soul that the Imam of the people can be the one who gives orders according to the Holy Book of Allah and should have his belief in the true faith and he should restrain his desires". (al-Irshad by Shaykh Mufid)

(ii) Imam's Kindness: About the merits of the Imam, Imam Ali Riza says: "The Imam is more kind to his people than their parents". He further says, "The Imam should possess political acumen so that he may organize the society with correct plans and schemes. He should be in a position to discharge his Divine obligations. The Imam should be so learned that he can speak to the people in their various languages and dialects". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XXV)

(iii) Devotion: One of the attributes of the Imam is his piety, and his indifference towards worldly things. Imam Ali about the patches stitched on his dress says, "Look at me, I have got so many patches on my dress that I feel ashamed to hand it over to somebody for putting any more patches on it". (Sermon 163,Peak of Eloquence)

At another place he says, "By Allah! I have no yearning and desire for the caliphate". (Sermon 200, Peak of Eloquence)

About devotion, simplicity and living like a poor man we hear from Imam Ali: "Indeed Allah has made it obligatory that the true and just Imams should lead their lives in a simple way and keep their souls under check so that they go side by side with the poor people, who may not suffer from a feeling of deprivation". (Sermon 204, Peak of Eloquence, ISP 1984)

(iv) Imam Never Doubts: Imam Ali says: "Since Truth dawned upon me I never entertained any doubt". (Letter 183,Peak of Eloquence, ISP 1984)

And he further said: "I never lied and the thing revealed to me was not false. I never misled anybody nor was I misled". (Letter 184, Peak of Eloquence, ISP 1984)

(v) The Imam Remains Unaffected by Aspersions: The Imam remains unaffected by aspersions or abuses. Imam Ali says, "I belong to that group on which aspersions and bad remarks have no effect at all". (Peak of Eloquence)

(vi) Imam Should Take the Lead: Anyone who considers himself to be the Imam of the people should before teaching the people and leading them should take the lead himself by educating his soul and before training others by speech should train himself by his deeds. (Peak of Eloquence)

(vii) Imam should be Frank and Above Formalities: Almighty Allah says to Prophet Muhammad:

Tell then: 'I do not seek any reward for my preaching you for I am not a pre tender. It (the Qur 'an) is nothing but a reminder to you from the Lord of the Universe. You will certainly know its truthfulness after a certain time. (Surah Sad, 38:86-88)

There are several signs of being formal, for instance, man is not prepared to accept the invitation of unknown people; he does not apologize for his

wrong doing; he does not ask people about things he does not know and he does not consult people whenever occasion arises. Anyone who indulges in formalities oppresses the inferior one and remains overawed by his superiors. All these things are the signs of formality, affectation, deceit and wrong methods. The Imam is hospitable, kind and affectionate to all the people.

That is why when people ran along with the mount of Imam Ali out of love and respect for him, the Holy Imam forbade them to do that and said: "That is not the correct thing". Similarly, when the people did the same thing with the Holy Prophet he also did not allow them to do it. In the life of the Prophets and the infallible Imams we come across many such incidents of their simplicity and sincerity.

(viii) The Imam is Tolerant But Not Sycophant: A Divine leader should for the sake of educating the people be tolerant but should not placate them by overlooking their crimes because tolerance is for correcting the people's affairs and to ignore the importance of his own exalted position but placating will amount to ignoring the commands of religion and for safeguarding one's position or attaining some higher rank.

Tolerance means that one should make allowances for the people's lapses and condone their shortcomings and waywardness so that they may be drawn towards religion. Placating means that we have no set principles, and maintain liaison with good and bad people as a matter of expediency and diplomacy for the sake of our personal interest. Tolerance emanates from one's broad-mindedness, while flattery comes from personal greed and weakness.

Thus by differentiating the meanings of tolerance and flattery we have to say that the Imam should be tolerant, broadminded, large-hearted and forgiving, so that the unguided people, who have gone astray because of personal weakness and fault, should not be disappointed, but should be attracted to and follow the Imam's teachings. Prophet Yusuf had told his brothers that they would not be questioned about their past misdeeds as the Holy Qur'an says:

He said, 'There shall be no reproof against you this day Allah may forgive you and He is the most Merciful of the merciful' (Surah Yusuf, 12:92)

Of course the Imam and the Guide should be tolerant and enduring as the Holy Prophet said, "I have been made Prophet so that I may be tolerant". (Nahjul Fasahat, hadith, No. 1093)

In another tradition, the Holy Prophet said, "Allah has commanded me to continue being tolerant just as I go on performing my obligatory functions of offering five daily prayers. (Nahjul Fasahat, hadith No. 677)

In a famous tradition we read that the Holy Prophet used to talk to the people according to their mental level. In many other traditions the religious scholars have been told not to speak out all that they know but while doing that they should consider the overall nature, mental horizon and the intelligence of their listeners.

In short tolerance is necessary for all, but for the Imam it is an obligatory condition.

(ix) Imam is Well-conversant with the Philosophical Approach of History. Imam Ali says to his son, Imam Hasan: "My dear son! Though the span of my life is not as large as that of some other people, who have passed away before me, yet I took great care to study their lives assiduously; I went through their activities I contemplated over their deliberations and; I studied their remains, relics and ruins; I pondered over their lives so deeply that I felt as if I have lived and worked with them from early ages of history down to our times, and I know what did them good and what brought harm to them". (Letter 31,Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

(x) Imam Does Not Take Undue Advantage of His Position: In this context the Holy Qur'an says about the Holy Prophet:

Allah would never give the Book, authority or prophethood to any man who would tell others to be his servants instead of being the servants of Allah. He would rather tell them to worship Allah for they had been teaching and studying the Book . (Surah Ale Imran, 3: 79)

(xi) Attending the Complaints: Imam Ali used to arrange the complaints in written order and the person against whom the complaint was lodged was summoned to the court of law and was questioned about the complaint and his financial assets were put to scrutiny. The Holy Imam often used to instruct his governors to send him their report on their activities and financial statement of account.

(xii) Patience and Conviction: One of the attributes of the Imam is his patience and conviction. The chief characteristics of Imam include his observation, conviction and faith.

The Holy Qur'an says about the people of Bani Isra'il:

We gave the Book to Musa (Do not have any doubt about the Day of Judgement) and made it a guide for the children of Isra'il. We appointed some of the Isra'ilites as leaders for their exercising patience to guide the others to Our commands. They had firm belief in Our revelations. (Surah as-Sajdah, 32:23, 24)

(xiii) Free from Prejudices: The Imam should be free from all prejudices and attachments of worldly nature, as for instance consideration of tribal, racial and parochial affiliations and all such matters as leave a bad influence on man.

(xiv) Sincerity of Purpose and Indifference to Worldly Gains: Imam Ali wrote to one of his governors in Azarbaijan: "You have not been entrusted with the governorship so that you amass wealth; nor is it a tasty and juicy morsel to be swallowed up". (Letter 5, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

The Holy Qur'an also says about the Prophets that they do not expect any gains from anyone. It records the statement of2, Prophets Nuh, Hud, Saleh, Lut and Shuayb. The Holy Qur'an says about these Prophets as follows:

And I do not ask you any reward for it, my reward is only with the Lord of the Worlds. (Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26: 109, 127, 145, 164, & 180)

Some More Attributes of Imam

• The Imam is the proof of Allah and he tells us what we should be like.

• The Imam is the light which reveals truth and realities, and banishes oppression, polytheism and ignorance.

• The Imam is trustworthy. He does not absorb man's potentialities within himself but invites the people towards Allah.

• The Imam possesses all kinds of knowledge, perfections and ancestral characteristics.

• The Imam is the vicegerant of Allah on earth. He is like a sacred and pious blood in the life of the society that is to say it serves as life-blood for rejuvenating the insipid society.

Imam Ali says, "Actually for the Imamate and guidance of the people the most suitable is he, who is the ablest of all the people and who has the greatest knowledge of the Divine Commandments". (Peak of Eloquence)

Thus the Imam should possess knowledge, ability, and capacity for everything. Imam Ali further says, "The standard of Imam can be borne only by that person who is fully conversant with all matters pertaining to truth, knowledge and wisdom and who possesses patience of the highest degree.

Imam and Equality of Rights: Imam Ali says, "I am one amongst you and a human being like you. Whatever is for you is for me also. The command of Allah is as much applicable to you as it is to me. The hardships in the mortal world are for you and me alike and above all, all of us have equal rights".(Commentary on Nahjul Balagha by Ibn Abil Hadid)

Safeguarding the Interest of Islam: Imam Ali was deprived of his due rights but he remained patient. He used to say that if the affairs of the Muslims were going to be managed satisfactorily he would not mind and instead would bear the injustice done to him.

Imam Ali says, "By Allah ! If I had not been afraid of dissensions among Muslims, I would certainly have adopted a different line of approach and would have retrieved my rights by force". (An Approach to Nahjul Balagha by Murtaza Mutahhery)

Ibn Abbas suggested to Imam Ali that he should not join the advisory council set up by Umar because the plan had been such that he would be deprived of his rights. The Holy Imam said, "Since I have been invited I will definitely go. I do not wish that because of me the meeting should be ineffectual ".

The Method of Appointing the Imam

In today's society the best way of selecting a leader or a man to an important position is by election. Though election may be the solution of this problem, yet this method cannot be correct in every situation, because election cannot alter the reality; it cannot make right as wrong or wrong as right. If the truth is truth it can never be untruth despite the limited number of people supporting it. Nobody can say that a thing selected by 51 persons can be better than the one selected by 49 persons.

True, for practical purposes the opinion of the majority can be considered but can majority opinion points towards truth or realities? No, in principle the Islamic government is established on Divine principles and the majority or the minority opinion has no value because this government in fact is the government of Allah.

Would it not be better that Allah Who is Omniscient and most Merciful of the merciful should Himself appoint the Imam for the guidance of mankind.

If you care to know you will find that in the Holy Qur'an at about eighty places the opinion of the majority has been condemned. It says:

If you obey most of the people in the land they will lead you astray from Allah's path for they only follow their own conjectures and preach falsehood. (Surah al-An'am, 6:117)

Thus it follows that majority of the immature and untrained people should not be accepted and in Islam the mutual consultation does not apply to the making of laws and the appointment of the Imam, but it only concerns the enforcement of the social laws. In fact, can there be any room for consultation in respect of number of rak'ats in prayers? Can a pebble turn into a pearl if the people gather round it? Can a piece of gold turn into a brick if people ignore it?

Apart from it the Qur'anic verses about consultation or counseling are not the proof of acceptance of the opinion of the majority, but on the contrary we take counseling as a means of arriving at a correct decision and not what the majority of people hold as their opinion. Consultation or counseling is meant for finding the opinion of the people and to sort out the correct opinion.

About counseling, the Holy Qur'an presents a triangle, one angle of which pertains to obtaining opinion, the other one to man's own inclination, and the third one dependence upon Allah. Suppose if the majority of people secure power would that be content with its rights or would start oppression Is the majority of people generally honest? Does the majority look to its interest and that of the other people with the same angle?

It is a fact that wise and sensible people have accepted this reality that the opinion of the majority of people in a given society is most often wrong but they are compelled to accept it because in other methods there are comparatively more flaws than in the method of selection by election.

But those who have firm belief in Allah do not consider it necessary, in the light of distinct commandments of Allah, revelations and clear-cut narrations, except in case of their enforcement, to follow the majority, and as such they have accepted the Commands of Allah and without fear and doubt are following them with perfect satisfaction.

I would repeat it here again that the opinion of the majority can be a solution of a problem but this method cannot be correct at every place and in every situation. We shall discuss matters about election afterwards.

Unpleasant Experiences

History has revealed that people got themselves elected by vote of majority but sooner or later its defects began to dawn upon them. We had considered those elected people as the best ones, and had prepared ourselves to lay our lives for their sake, and they on their part acted in such a manner by deceit, fraud and diplomacy, that we could not become aware of our wrong decision, and the later events established that they were other than what we had supposed them to be, as their position and status had changed them altogether.

Actually we do not possess the knowledge of the unseen and thus as we are unaware of the coming events and the nature of the people's disposition we cannot form a definite opinion about them.

Are man's circumstances not apt to change? Is it not a fact that certainty changes into doubt and vice versa? Does fear not change into faith, and does faith sometimes not change into atheism? We have before us many instances of people about whom we had great hopes but they disappointed us.

We also know of instances of people about whom we could not imagine that they would become so virtuous and pious, but all of a sudden they changed and became the source of virtues and blessings. Did the paid magicians of Fir'aun not come out to disgrace Prophet Musa and did they not all of a sudden become the followers of Prophet Musa?

Was Bal'am Ba'ur not a wise man who for the love of worldly things lost all his merits?

By citing these instances it is not our intention to denounce altogether the method of election or the verdict of the people, but our aim is to prove that election can be a means of solving a certain problem but it cannot be a correct, sure and Divine means.

Therefore, the best means to solve all problems is the means of Islam. Perhaps we can liken the means of election to the process of drawing the lots but this too can be on some occasions a source of solving a problem but it can not always a practical and sensible means.

To elaborate the above-mentioned discussion we reproduce below an interesting narration of Imam Zaynul Abidin:

The Holy Imam says, "If you come across a man who is courteous, appears to be of good character, possesses the signs of devotion and worship, and is quite humble and modest, you should wait for some time, so that he may not deceive you".

The Holy Imam giving the reasons for patience says: "There are many people who are unable to gain worldly benefits not because of their faith and piety, but because of their physical infirmity, mental incapability, lack of personality, or fear.

Thus that person who is incapable, timid and characterless uses religion as a shield to gain the world and he always deceives the people by his pretensions and affectation, and, if circumstances permit he would plunge himself into corruption and immorality".

In the latter part of this narration the Holy Imam says, "If you see that a person is also away from unlawful property, even then you should wait, and not make a hasty decision about his being a good person because a man has varying desires. There are many people who avoid unlawful property but they become inclined to other undesirable and unlawful deeds".

Would that we were able to comprehend the true meaning of the Imam's saying.

The Holy Imam continues to say, "When you see that a man abstains from all evil deeds and does not deceive you also, you should watch his intelligence, because there are many people who are away from evils and

yet they do not have commonsense and intelligence, as a result of which they become inclined towards evil instead of good".

In the last portion of his narration Imam Zaynal Abidin continues to say, "If you see that a person possesses good intelligence and does not deceive you also, even then you should wait and see whether he lets his desires overpower his intelligence or with the help of his intelligence he is dominated by his desires, and how much ambitious he is of acquiring false leadership, because there are persons who are losers in this world and also in the Hereafter.

They do not forsake the world for the love of Allah but for the sake of achieving the false power and authority. To them the pleasure of having the authority is more important than the pleasure of the world and its bounties.

The Holy Imam at last says: "In fact a noble man is he, who considers disgrace with truth better than honour coming through evil". (Biharul Anwar, vol. LXXIV, p. 184)472

The gist of this long narration is that the question of selecting a leader of the Ummah by means of election cannot be settled when all the influencing factors of deceiving the people and of the people being deceived are predominant.

I again repeat that election can be a means of solving a problem to a certain extent but it cannot be effective at all places and in all circumstances.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq says, "If a friend of yours has reached a high position or status and he still has one-tenth of his attachment and love that he had for you before, he is not a bad friend". (Biharul Anwar, vol. LXXIV, p. 157)

Just imagine how power changes man's attitude. Therefore many good-natured and sincere people become changed in their attitude and behaviour after attaining a position of authority. That is why we say that the appointment of the leader should come through Divine authority as Allah is All-Knowing and He knows the unseen. Allah alone knows better as to who should be endowed with Prophethood. The Holy Qur'an says:

Allah knows best where to direct His Message. (Surah al-An'am, 6:125)

People's Decision is Not Always Correct

Imam Muhammad Baqir said to Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari: ' O Jabir! You cannot be a friend of ours until you make yourself such that if all the people of the town say about you that you are a bad man and you do not grieve and gumble or if they say that you are a good man and you do not feel happy about it and that to know your own-self and submit yourself to the scrutiny of the Holy Book". (Buzurg Salan, vol. I, p. 431)

From this narration it becomes evidently clear that the common opinion or decision of the people is not always correct.

After it has been proved that Imamate is an important principle of the belief and is the source of guidance and development of the social order and that without following the Imam worship is not accepted despite one's day and night worshipping of Allah.

The Holy Imam says: "By Allah! If some one engages himself in prayers during the night, and fasts during the day, but does not accept our leadership, will, on the Day of Judgement, either face a great torment of

Allah or at-east Allah will not be pleased with him". (Biharul Anwar, vol.XXVI, p. 190)

We read in history that the question of Imamate has greatly influenced the people. It left a particular effect on their destiny and thereafter they were involved in threats, intimidation, temptation, and suspicions by which they for themselves installed fictitious leaders and Imams and thus brought various sections of the population on the brink of disaster.

Now it is appropriate that after all these discussions we should trace the means and method of appointment of the Imam from the Holy Qur'an and traditions. Before that it is better that we review the various prevailing methods in vogue and then compare them with that of the Islamic method and know the Islamic values.

Various Methods of Appointing the Leader

In this world people acquire leadership through revolt, force, power and oppression or through a committee or a parliament. It is also through general elections or through inheritance that a leader is appointed.

Obviously, armed revolt is a transgression and for practical purposes it thrusts the authority of a minority ignoring the views of the majority. This method thrusts one person on the people. The system of election is also not without defects as it also comes under the definition of force or compulsion. The only flawless means therefore is the Divine method by which only flawless means therefore is the infallible Imam is appointed.

The Imam is Appointed by Allah

After Almighty Allah tested Prophet Ibrahim's endurance in life, loss of property and separation from wife etc. and he came out successful in all of them He appointed him to the position of Imamate and leadership. The wordings of the Divine command according to the Holy Qur'an are, "inni ja 'iluka linnasi imama". The Holy Qur'an says:

When his Lord tested Ibrahim's faith and he satisfied the test, He said, 'I am appointing you as the leader of men'. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:124)

From the wordings "I am appointing you" it is indicated that the appointment of the Imam is in the Hands of Allah and thus Imam should know all the laws and commandments which are applicable to man and the world.

The Imam should be aware of the ultimate result of the course of action which he adopts. Imam should not look for his self-interest and should not be influenced by internal and external factors. The Imam should possess the human qualities and virtues of the highest order. Obviously, such prerequisites are not found in ordinary men and the people too are unaware of these qualities.

The weak, ignorant and misguided people should seek the guidance of the Imam. But when the Imam himself happens to be ignorant, misguided, and uncertain, haughty, timid or miserly what would become of the nation?

It is for this reason that the handing over of the people to a fallible Imam is cruelty and insult to humanity and entrusting the responsibility of Imamate to those who are ignorant who do not know of the unforeseen, who

do not possess intelligence and insight but are only guided by their apparent eyesight only, is cruelty to them also.

Let us not go too far; even in the present day progressive society if anyone says that such and such person, who is not very well-known, is more capable and experienced than the known politicians and experienced ones, possesses the ability of leading the society to progress and development, no one will accept it, because man is the slave of his own inclination and there are extremely few people who are completely just and justice-loving and it is also not possible that a leader or a ruler should be above favouritism, nepotism and the feeling of partiality.

We read in the Holy Qur'an that the people used to ask as to why the Holy Qur'an was not revealed to the two famous persons of Makkah and Ta'if. The Holy Qur'an says:

And they say: 'Why was not this Qur'an revealed to a man of importance in two towns?' (Surah az-Zukhruf, 43:31)

Those people thought that since such and such person was well-known, wealthy and man of means, the revelation should also have been made to them. This is the example of the thinking of the majority people. When Talut was appointed by Divine Will as Commander of the Army, many people refused to accept his authority because of his poverty. The Holy Qur'an says:

And when their Prophet said to them: 'Allah has appointed Talut as a king for you '. They replied, 'How can he rule over us when we deserve more to be king than he; besides he does not have abundant wealth'. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:247)

Is it not a fact that, when the Holy Prophet was busy in delivering the Friday prayer's sermon, the sound of the beating of the drum rose high after the arrival of the merchandise and people left listening to the sermon, rushed to the market and got themselves busy in making purchases, and hardly a few people had remained in the Masjid? This too is an example of the thinking of the majority.

In short after such bitter experiences how can we leave the question of the appointment of the Imam in the hands of the people? This is one argument in favour of our belief regarding the Imamate that like the Prophet the Imam is also appointed by Allah.

In this context we quote a statement of Martyr, Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr. After dealing with a few preliminary things he deduces that the method of the appointment of the Imam should be the nomination made by Allah and His Prophet. And its early stages are these:

(i) On the one hand the Holy Prophet was responsible for bringing about a radical change and an everlasting religious, intellectual, and political revolution and to convert the system of ignorance to the Islamic system of human affairs.

(ii) On the other hand, the period of 23 years of the Prophethood was such that the Muslims were under hardships and torture, fear and deprivation in Makkah, and in Madina too they were facing hardships and were busy in waging wars against the enemies of Islam. Still, these 23 years

were very small as compared to the big revolution that these years brought about.

(iii) Another important point that one should not lose sight of is that the Holy Prophet did not depart from this world all of a sudden so that we may say that for the guidance of the Ummah he had very little time at his disposal.

In short, since the duration of 23 years for changing the social structure according to Islamic standard is very small, it was necessary that this process of Islamization of the social order should have continued after the passing away of the Holy Prophet. Here we discuss a few aspects of this process.

(i) One point of view may be that (Allah forbid!) the Holy Prophet was not careful to arrange the continued guidance and the stability of the radically viable religion and left us in the lurch.

This view is quite unacceptable because when even an ordinary person cannot think of leaving his whatever little accomplishment he has achieved without being taken care of by somebody who is responsible to maintain it, then how could the Holy Prophet in view of his extreme concern for Islam and devotion and sincerity of purpose, have left his achievements unattended? About the Prophet's extreme concern and great worry for Islam the Holy Qur'an says:

A Messenger from your own people has come to you. Your distress and suffering is extremely grevious to him. He really cares about you and is very compassionate and merciful to the believers. (Surah at-Tauba, 9:128)

Perhaps you will kill yourself out of grief because they disbelieve this Book. (Surah al-Kahf, 18:6)

The Holy Prophet who was so much concerned about the people and the consolidation of Islamic order could not leave the people to themselves. Did the Holy Prophet not during the course of the Battle of Tabuk which lasted for 80 days leave his deputy in Madina? Was Abu Bakr prepared to leave the people to themselves and not to entrust them to Umar? Can this be accepted that Abu Bakr was concerned about the people after him but the Holy Prophet was not? Thus this point of view cannot be accepted.

(ii) In this context there is another point of view. Suppose we say that the Holy Prophet at the time of his departure from this world left the matter of the guidance and the leadership of the Ummah to the people themselves for mutual consultation and adopting the method of election.

On this point of view an objection can be raised as to why Abu Bakr, like the Holy Prophet did not leave the question of his succession to the advisory council and instead nominated Umar. And then why did Umar not seek the people's verdict by means of their votes and instead set up an advisory council comprising six persons and that council in fact was a dictatorial body as he had laid down the condition that anyone who was selected as a caliph by this council must be supported by Abdur Rahman bin 'Awf?

What kind of an advisory council it was that only one of its members was given the right of veto and the decision would be acceptable of that group, to which the member with the power of veto belonged? Was this anything other than dictatorship and despotism?

Another question regarding this point of view is about the explanation of the event of Ghadir-i Khum.

Now that since both the first and the second points of view are not acceptable, the only course that is left open is that the Holy Prophet who was so much concerned about his people should select an able person to lead and guide the Ummah and introduce him to the people as the most capable of all persons in matter of his understanding of the religion.

And accordingly he introduced Imam Ali, who had the capability of performing his deeds, had strength of character in leading and guiding the people, could work for the welfare and progress of the society and above all had to his credit the merits of knowledge, wisdom and foresight as well as remarkable achievements.

An Interesting Point: A very important point worth noting is that in the matter of Imamate the Holy Qur'an has mentioned with one word "right" or the "covenant" as when Prophet Ibrahim asked for the leadership of his offspring the Almighty Allah replied as is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an:

Ibrahim asked, 'Will this leadership also continue through my descendants'. The Lord replied, 'The unjust do not have the right to exercise My authority. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:124)

Thus since Imamate is the covenant of Allah we should not decide it by consultation or by counseling, because it does not relate to the covenant of Allah but it pertains to the affairs of the people.

Therefore, in the Holy Qur'an at two different verses where this word "Consultation" or "Counseling" has been mentioned it relates only to the affairs of the people or to the command to the Holy Prophet or when Allah commands the Holy Prophet to consult the people in their own affairs. It can well be noted that counseling is only related to the affairs of the people in the society and not to the question of appointing the Imam, which is only related to the covenant of Allah. The two verses of the Holy Qur'an indicated above are as follows:

Only through the Divine Mercy have you (Muhammad) been able to deal with your followers so gently. If you had been stern and heard-hearted they would all have deserted you a long time ago. Forgive them and ask Allah to forgive (their sins) and consult with them in certain matters. But when you reach a decision trust Allah. Allah loves those who trust Him. (Surah Ale-Imran, 3:159)

Those who are steadfast in prayers, conduct their affairs with consultation among themselves. (Surah ash-Shura, 42:38)

Some More Unpleasant Experiences: Prophet Musa selected 70 men from Bani Isra'il and took them to Mt Sinai, but, for one silly question of theirs, all of them became the target of Allah's wrath, and thus the choice of such a distinguished Prophet was brought to naught. The Holy Qur'an says:

Musa selected seventy men from his people to attend Our appointment. (In Our Presence) when an earthquake jolted them to death, Musa said, 'Lord, had you wanted to destroy them, why did you not destroy them and me before? Are you destroying us for what the fools among us have done? This (destruction) is only a trial through which you cause some to go astray

and guide others. You are our Guardian. Forgive us and have mercy on us; You are the best of those who forgive'. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:155)

It is because of such unpleasant happenings that we do not feel satisfaction at the method of selection by election and therefore it is better that we should entrust the system of election to that Being Who knows better than all of us the realities, mysteries, and unseen events, that is, Almighty Allah, the Lord of the worlds All-Knowing, All-Seeing, All-Hearing.

Natural Flaws of Election System

Election that is, taking the opinion of everybody serves a good purpose for solving a certain problem on certain occasions but basically it entails such defects and flaws as one cannot help to ignore. These flaws are of the following kinds:

(i) Every man selects one person of his choice but it gives rise to rancour and jealousy with the result that bad blood, animosity and feeling of revolt are created between the people and the man who is elected.

(ii) Every elected person naturally takes sides with the people who got him elected and only they become important in his eyes. The elected person takes into consideration the wishes of his electors and tries to please them by being partial, contrary to the truth, and this sort of attitude in itself would be like polytheism, because man will be forsaking Allah and will be trying to please others.

(iii) As a result of the selection of a leader by election, uncertainty, errors, forgetfulness and desires may lead us to the wrong path and detract us from truth.

(iv) There is no guarantee that the elected persons would not change their mind and adopt a new course of action out of expediency.

Hence, all these possibilities should be given consideration while supporting the system of election for selection of a leader.

The Right Method For Selecting the Imam

The only right path for selecting the Imam is the same one which the Holy Qur'an tells us as we consider and believe the Imamate to be like Prophethood; we believe the Imam to be like the Prophet and we feel the necessity of the Imam as we feel the necessity of the Prophet. The Imam's function is also like the Prophet's in the matter of guiding the human society to the right path. Therefore, we quote the same Qur'anic verse here which we quoted in our discussion on Prophethood. The Holy Qur'an says:

Surely, in Our Hands is the guidance. (Surah al-Layl, 92:12)

Thus just as the Prophet is appointed from Allah, the Qur'anic verses point to the fact that appointment of the Imam also is from Allah as the Imam's appointment is primarily concerned with the covenant of Allah as well as with the function of guiding the people to the right path.

In this context Abu Ali Sina says: "The Imam should be infallible and highly virtuous. Since it is not possible for an ordinary person to know such spiritual and intellectual characteristics in man and even if he knows something of it, he knows it in a defective way or through the aid of signs. Thus it is evident that the appointment of the Imam should come from Allah

as He alone knows all the secrets of human beings and the unseen matters as well as things which are of good value to us".

Election is Forbidden

The Holy Qur'an says:

No believing men and women have any choice in a matter after Allah and His Prophet have decided it. Whoever disobeys Allah and His Prophet has clearly lost the way and gone astray. (Surah al-Ahzab, 33.36)

Your Lord creates and chooses whom He pleases. The good is not for them to choose, Glory be to Allah, and exalted be He above wha t they associate with Him. (Surah al-Qasas, 28:68)

In Tafsir al-Safi there are many narrations which say that when Allah has chosen somebody for leadership the people should not follow anybody except him. In another narration we read that because of the possibility of error and wrong judgement, the very worth of election goes. Thus the real value lies in the selection, which comes from Allah as it is He alone Who knows the man's secrets and the unseen matters.

Nomination is the Only Correct Method

We have already mentioned that the correct method of choosing is the one which comes from Allah only as it has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and the traditions and its example is found in the event of the Ghadir-i Khum. The year of 10 A.H. was the final year of the life of the Holy Prophet. In this year it was decided that the Holy Prophet should proceed from Madina to Makkah for performing the hajj. As soon as the Muslims came to know of it, they prepared themselves to perform the hajj in company with the Holy Prophet.

Therefore, in the journey to Makkah, a large caravan accompanied the Holy Prophet. When these people were returning to Madina after performing the pilgrimage, they arrived at the cross-road, from where they were to disperse and move to their respective destinations.

From here a road led to Madina in the North, to Iraq in the East, to Egypt in the West and to Yemen in the South. At this point of journey, the Holy Prophet ordered the Muslims to stop. The name of this place was Ghadir-i Khum. That day was Thursday and it was the eighth day after Idul Azha i.e. 18th of Zil Hijjah.

At the command of the Holy Prophet all the people stayed there and those who had already gone ahead were asked to return and wait so that those who were coming from behind could also arrive. It was a congregation of about 100,000 people.

The day was very hot and the people's feet were burning in the scorching sand. All of them offered the afternoon prayers in company with the Holy Prophet and thereafter an important announcement began. The litters from the camels' back were placed one above the other for the purpose of erecting a raised platform. The Holy Prophet then went up to the pulpit and said, "Can you hear my voice?" All replied, "Yes, O Holy Prophet!"

The Holy Prophet then glorified Allah and reaffirmed the belief in Monotheism, Prophethood and the Resurrection Day, and told the people about his mission. Everybody praised him for his mission. Thereafter, he

said: "Death is busy in its function. Very soon I may be recalled. I do submit myself to the call of Allah. I am also accountable and you are also accountable".

After this he took the fresh affirmation of people on Monotheism, Prophethood and the Resurrection Day and then said "I am leaving amongst you two most precious things, one the lloly Qur'an and the other my ahlul bayt. Both these things shall never get separated from each other. You should endeavour hard not to go ahead of them nor lag behind them"

Then the Holy Prophet looked all around himself and after spotting Imam Ali he beckoned him to come to the Pulpit. He then raised Imam Ali's hand so high that everybody recognized Imam Ali, and then the Holy Prophet in a loud voice asked: "Who is the ablest of all among the Muslims?"

All in one voice replied, "Only Allah and His Prophet know it better". The Holy Prophet said, "Ali is the master and leader of those whose master and leader I am". The Holy Prophet repeated this and blessed those who took Imam Ali as their friend and condemned those who took him as their enemy.

I had decided that since the event of Ghadir-i Khum is absolutely clear I should better not repeat it here but I thought it worthwhile to mention it briefly.

To elaborate the event of Ghadir-i Khum is like saying something about the sun and its light, because it is an event which has been quoted by hundreds of both Shi'ah and Sunni traditionalists and dozens of books have been written on it in proof of its authenticity. That is one reason why we have given a brief account of it.

The Nomination of the Best Person

The nomination of Imam Ali was not without reason and wisdom, because his devotion, bravery, virtues, moral attributes, piety, dedication to Allah and his sincerity were evident to everyone so much so that even his enemies were not able to point out even the slightest weakness in him. It was only he who never prostrated himself before false gods but right from his very childhood he believed in Allah.

It was Imam Ali who, when on the night of the migration of the Holy Prophet his enemies had planned to kill him during his sleep, slept in the bed of the Holy Prophet and the Holy Prophet then safely migrated to Madina.

It was Imam Ali who carried with him the Divine decree contained in the first six verses of Surah at-Tauba forbidding the idolaters of Makkah to join the ceremonies of hajj, and boldly announced to the polytheists at the top of his voice that from then onward no infidel would ever enter the precincts of the Holy Ka'bah.

It was Imam Ali about whom the Holy Prophet has narrated hundreds of his supreme merits. There are several books of Shi'ah and Ahlus Sunnah in which the merits of Imam Ali have been recorded.We would quote some of them afterwards.

Some of the Attributes of Imam Ali and ahlul bayt

There are many attributes of Imam Ali and ahlul bayt but for the purpose of establishing the identity of the Imam we reproduce a few of them below.

Ibn Abbas narrates that Imam Ali on the advice of the Holy Prophet made a vow to observe fast for three days with Lady Fatimatuz Zahra and Fizza (her maid-servant) after the recovery of his two beloved sons, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn from illness.

When both the sons returned to their normal health there was nothing to eat in the house while fulfilling the vow. Imam Ali borrowed three Sa' (about 9 kilos) of barley from a Jew, Sham'un by name. Lady Fatimatuz Zahra grinded 3 kilos of barley into flour and baked them in fine breads for breaking fast on the first day.

But as soon as the time of breaking fast approached a beggar appeared and said, "Peace be on you, Oahlul bayt of the Holy Prophet! I am an indigent Muslim, give me some food, Allah will reward you with the dishes of food in Paradise". Hearing this all the inmates of the house handed over to the beggar their respective breads and instead broke their fast with water only.

On the second day they observed their fast again, and when the time after sunset prayers came for breaking the fast, an orphan came and asked for food. Everybody in the house again handed over their share of bread to the orphan and broke their fast with water only. Likewise on the third day of fasting at the time of breaking fast a captive asked for food and they did the same and gave him their breads and instead broke fast with water only.

On the fourth day the Holy Imam took both of his sons to the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet observed that the faces of his grandsons were pale with weakness. He enquired about the reason of this and proceeded to the House of Lady Fatima. There the Holy Prophet saw his beloved daughter in the worship of Allah and noticed that her eyes were sunken on account of weakness. When the Holy Prophet after seeing their condition became very unhappy.

The Archangel Jibra'il came with Allah's revelation of glad news and said to the Holy Prophet. "O Prophet of Allah! Congratulations. Allah for paying compliments to these people has revealed a surah for them.

These people despite intense hunger have given their food to a beggar, an orphan, and a captive for the love of Allah only and they had no desire in their heart of hearts save their gratitude to Allah. They never wanted to take any advantage by this extraordinary noble deed. Their only aim was to please Allah". The Holy Qur'an says:

And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive. They say: 'We only feed you for Allah's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks'. (Surah ad-Dahr, 76:8-9)

This narration has been quoted by all the Shi'ah scholars. Late Allama Amini has drawn references from twenty-four Sunni scholars also. (See: al-Ghadir, vol. III, p. 111; Tafsir Kashshaf, vol. III, p. 239, Egypt Publication; Tafsir Bayzawietc.)

Another Incident: Once when Imam Ali passed by Shiba and Abbas he heard Shiba saying, "I am the architect and the key bearer of the Holy Ka'bah" and Abbas saying, "My function was to provide the drinking water

to the pilgrims". By this each one of them were bragging about their superiority. Imam Ali said, "Though I feel abashed to say, but still I will have to say that despite my tender age the superiority that I possess is not possessed by you that is, after I took my sword and made a jihad you people embraced belief in Allah and His Holy Prophet". This remark however, did not please them.

Abbas after becoming annoyed went to the Holy Prophet and complained. The Holy Prophet asked Imam Ali, "Why did you say such thing to your uncle Abbas?". Imam Ali answered, "O Holy Prophet! My remark was not wrong". At this moment the Archangel came with the following Divine revelation.

Do you think that giving a drink of water to the pilgrims and the guarding of the sacred Masjid, is the same as one who believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement and strives hard in Allah's way? (Surah at-Tauba, 9:19) (Tafsir Namuna)

Even the Angel Could Not Do

When the Holy Prophet decided to migrate to Madina, he entrusted Imam Ali in Makkah to pay off his debts and to return the entrusted properties to their rightful owners and said to him, "Tonight the enemies have planned to besiege my house and to kill me. Go and sleep in my bed". Thus on that fateful night Imam Ali slept in the bed of the Holy Prophet.

Allah asked Jibra'il and Mika'il, "I have prolonged the life of one of yours. Who is prepared to give priority to life of another over that of his life? ' None of them consented. Then they were told to see how Imam Ali got himself prepared to lay his life for the sake of saving the life of the Holy Prophet. This famous fateful night is called "laylatul mabit" And the revelation that came down is as follows.

Among men there is one who gives his life to seek Allah' pleasure. Allah is affectionate to His creatures. (Surah al-Baqarah 2:207)

Imam's House is the Place of Angels' Visits

At this time of writing these lines it is the night of 21st of Ramazan 1404 A.H. It will not be out of order if I mention a few things which I have understood from the traditions:

"The laylatul Qadr" (the night of Destiny) comes not for once in several years but every year. According to Qur'anic verse the angels descend down on earth on this night In the time of the Holy Prophet the angels used to visit him in this night. Whom after the Holy Prophet did the angels visit? Did they come to every ordinary man or to him, who was nearest to Allah and the Holy Prophet?

From the narration of Imam Ja'far Sadiq it is proved that in all times the presence of a living Imam is necessary and as he is the centre of attraction of the angels it is one of the very highly exalted attributes of the Imam. (Vide: al-Kafi, vol. I)

Some Other Attributes of Imam Ali

The Holy Prophet on several occasions addressed Imam Ali as his brother. (Vide. al-Ghadir, vol. III, p. 115, 124)

In the Battle of Trench one single stroke of Imam Ali inflicted on the enemy was far greater in value than the entire worshipping of all the people and geni'i.

Imam Ali was the first to declare his faith in the Holy Prophet.

In Islam the first thanks-giving prostration was that which Imam Ali performed and that was when he was offered a Divine opportunity to sleep in the bed of the Holy Prophet who safely came out of his house besieged by his enemies and migrated to Madina.

In many of the narrations of the Holy Prophet Imam Ali has been introduced as a model of a perfect man. He never got himself separated from truth nor the Holy Qur'an. He is the chief of the world and the Hereafter. To look at his face is an act of worship, and his followers are the best specimens of human beings.

Mutual Rights of the Imam and His Followers

From the narrations mentioned in Biharul Anwar, we reproduce a few of them which throw light on the rights of the Imam on the people and the people's rights on the Imam.

Imam Ali said to the people, "You and I have rights on each other. My rights on you are:

(i) You should stick to your oath of allegiance to me.

(ii) You should remain my well-wisher both in my presence.

(iii) You should answer me as soon as I summon you, and your rights on me are:

(i) Sympathy with and wishing well to you

(ii) Security of the Public treasury

(iii) Education and training". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XXVII)

In another tradition Imam Ali said, "You have as much rights on me as I have on you". Elaborating this point the Holy Imam continued: "The greatest of all the rights that Allah has made obligatory on mankind are the same mutual rights which are incumbent upon the Imam and the people".

Imam Sajjad in his treatise on the rights, considers the right of the Imam as the most important.

Imam Ali said to the people, "You should not talk with me as you talk with the despots and the tyrants. Also do not indulge in false modesty by placating me or ignoring me. Do not consider that your reminding me of things will be unpalatable to me. When you feel the truth and wish to give some advice, do not hesitate to tell me that. If Allah had not protected me I too would not have been free from errors". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XXVII, p. 253)

Islam has taken great care and precautions about the qualifications and attributes of the Imam, but after the appointment and installation of the Imam and after identifying the Imam it has made it obligatory to follow and abide by his orders. (al-Kafi has quoted several narrations on this subject).

Imam Ja'far Sadiq in the matter of court decision recommends the people to refer to the jurists and in the end of the narration says, "Anyone who refuses to accept the decision and decrees of the jurists (fuqaha) is like the one, who has rejected us, and whoever rejects us is like the one, who professes polytheism".(al-Kafi, chapter: ikhtalaf al-hadith)

A tradition says: "Anyone who offers prayers during the night, observes fast during the day, performs hajj every year, and distributes his wealth in the cause of Allah but does not identify the vicegerant of Allah and does not perform his deeds under his guidance, has no right on Allah". (Safinatul Bihar)

Obligations of the Ummah

It is narrated in the traditions that the people have three obligations towards their infallible Imam.

(i) Identifying the Imam and that too with clear-cut signs, reasonings and high merits which are present in an infallible Imam.

(ii) To follow the commands of the Imam by heart and soul, that is by speech and conduct.

(iii) To refer to the Imam in matters of disputes and to make them the judge and arbiter. (al-Kafi, vol. II)

The Last Purpose of the hajj

We read in one of the narrations of Imam Baqir that he saw some people who were circumambulating the Holy Ka'bah. He said to them, "Circumambulation was being done in the days of the Age of Ignorance also. When Islam came, it defined the rules and rituals of circumambulation as well as the hajj, so that people performing the hajj should gather round us and profess their allegiance to us in matter of love, regard and guardianship". Thereafter, the Holy Imam recited the following verse from the Holy Qur'an:

Lord, I have settled some of my off-springs in a barren valley near Your Sacred House so that they could be steadfast in prayers. Lord, fill the hearts of the people with love for them and provide fruits for their sustenance so that they may give thanks. (Surah Ibrahim, 14:37)

Prophet Ibrahim had not entreated Allah to turn the hearts of the people toward the Holy Ka'ba but he entreated Him to turn the people's heart towards the love of his infallible offsprings. (al-Kafi)

Thus one of the purposes of the hajj is to turn the people towards the Imam.

There are however some signs, which go to show how the mutual obligations of the Imam and the people are fulfilled. Imam Ali describes these signs as follows:

(i) Establishment of love and affection.

(ii) Protection of religion from changes, innovations being made in it, apathy of the people, and dangers of all kinds.

(iii) The untruth is expelled from all spheres of activity and because of the people's attachment and love for the Imam the foundation of truth becomes firm and sound.

(iv) The paths of religion become bright and clear.

(v) Justice is firmly rooted.

(vi) Everything goes on functioning smoothly.

(vii) The consideration of mutual rights from both the sides (of the Imam and his followers) consolidates the government, frustrates the designs of the enemies, and accordingly the Imam and the people act according to set

rules, laws and regulations. The possibility of enemy's influence is eliminated and the evil-doers do not get chance to cause any damage. (Biharul Anwar)

These however are some of the results of the mutual faith between the Imam and his followers.

The Zealous Shi'ah

A man from Khorasan suggested to Imam Ja'far Sadiq to initiate an armed campaign as the Holy Imam had with him about 100,000 followers. In order to test the fidelity of that man the Holy Imam said: "Just get down into this burning oven". He became hesitant to obey the command of the Holy Imam. Meanwhile, a person came and greeted the Imam and the Holy Imam said to him, "Will you get down into this burning oven!"

That man without any reluctance and with pleasure got into the burning oven. The Holy Imam then said to that Khorasanian man, "We have with us a few of those men, who can get into the burning oven on our command. Others are not real Shi'ahs. There is a lot of difference between one's words and deeds". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XI, p. 139)

It is to be noted that the man who got into the burning fire of the oven remained unaffected and was hale and hearty like Prophet Ibrahim when he was thrown into the burning fire.

False Shi'ah

We read in the narrations that anyone, who claims to be a true Shi'ah and follower of Imam Ali, but attaches himself to others, in fact, tells lies.

How the Imamate of the Infallible Imams Got Weakened?

There is a narration of Imam Ja'far Sadiq who says. "If Bani Umayya had not produced men who wrote what they were ordered to do, amass war booty, and fought for their sake, Bani Umayya would not have usurped our rights. The Imamate got weakened for lack of confidence and will-power of our so-called allies, who easily accept defeat". (Biharul Anwar, vol. XLVII, p. 383)

There are many people who are with the Imam but because of fear and greed they become the lackeys of others.

Sufferings of the True Believers

The true believers in Imamate and the teachings of the Holy Imams were subjected to such atrocities that I am at a loss to understand from where I should begin and where I should end them. But since our purpose is to refer to them, we should like to content ourselves with mentioning some of them.

(i) Social Injustice: By taking the Fadak, which yielded sufficient income in those days, from Imam Ali his financial condition was purposely weakened.

(ii) Slandering: Our oppressed Imams were subjected to slanders of the worst kind so much so that when the people of Syria heard of the martyrdom of Imam Ali in the Kufa mosque they started asking for what purpose he happened to go to the Masjid? Was he amongst those who went there to offer prayers?

(iii) Patronizing the Imams' Enemies: In order to weaken the position of the Imams, their enemies were given full support and encouragement.

(iv) Injustice to Thinking and Understanding: By raising the slogan "Qur'an is enough for us" the people were prevented from listening to the traditions of the Holy Prophet. The infallible Imam were forced to remain tight-lipped. By this the very source of knowledge and wisdom was cut off from the people.

(v) Deprivation of the Well-wishers: The kinsmen and theahlul bayt of the Holy Prophet were deprived of their due share from the Public Treasury.

(vi) Fictitious Traditions: Through man like Abu Hurayra the traditions from the Holy Prophet were concocted and fictitious traditions were produced for the purpose of extolling Bani Umayyah and disparaging Bani Hashim. Fictitious traditions were concocted in such a large number that it became difficult to sort out the authentic and genuine traditions.

(vii) Tampering with the Facts: The narrations about Imamate and guidance were so tampered with and misinterpreted that the people failed to realize their importance.

(viii) Distorted Concept of Imamate: The institution of Imamate which was established according to the covenant of Allah, was degraded to such an extent that it was brought to the level of Yazid's barbaric rulership.

(ix) The Ignorant Substituted for the Learned: All the Divine values and standards were brought to naught. Everyone by dint of power and authority changed the course of society according to his own whims and wishes. Instead of following the leader who used to say, 'Ask me what you want, I will answer you' they followed the leader who used to say, 'Don't ask me; I don't know, leave me alone'. The people instead of going towards Imam Ali, the 'gate of knowledge' followed the caliph Umar, who after facing difficulties in all types of problems used to seek the advice of Imam Ali and used say, "If Ali had not come to my rescue, I would have been ruined".

(x) Excuses and Animosity: One excuse that was put forward was that Imam Ali was younger in age and of lively nature. Many Muslims had a grudge against Imam Ali because in the Battles of Khaybar, Badr, Uhud and Hunayn he had put the disbelieving ancestors of the converted Muslims to death. That deep-seated rancour and animosity had forced Imam Ali to go into seclusion so much so that he said that he was subjected to oppression from the very first day.

The fact remains that the high attributes and virtues of Imam Ali have been so expressively and widely narrated that no other companion of the Holy Prophet can equal him in these attributes but despite this highly exalted position, he was ignored! Truly speaking, can a person of lively nature not be an able man?

Did the Holy Prophet in his last days not depute Usama, an eighteen year old young man, as the Commander of the Army to lead the expedition to Syria despite the presence of Abu Bakr and Umar? Is the old age a eondition for becoming a leader? Has not the Holy Qur'an made knowledge, piety, jihad, migration, dedicated services, sincerity and honesty the criteria of human values and virtues? Then for what other reasons did we go against

Divine principles of judging the merits and adopted a different standard altogether?

(xi) Imam Himself Remained Aloof: The most important thing is that the people say that Imam Ali had contented himself with the religious and spiritual leadership of the people only and left the political and military leadership to others. It is difficult to understand that the exhortations of the Holy Imam in Nahjul Balaghah (Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984) were only for the people coming to him for the solution of religious problems only.

Does anyone need to owe allegiance for seeking an advice on religious matter? The Holy Imam several times complained of the violation of his political rights. He never complained that the people did not consult him on religious matters, for the people were compelled to ask him about religious problems.

(xii) Reason behind Forsaking the Imam: It is highly painful to note that the people say how it was possible that all the people were in the wrong by forsaking the Imam and owing allegiance to others? They say that in fact when the people forsook the Imam there must have been some good reason behind it.

The answer to this is that first of all not all the people forsook Imam Ali and secondly the majority is not the proof of truth. Should the clear-cut injunctions and commandments of the Holy Qur'an be abandoned and people's conduct should be viewed only?

It seems that these people have totally forgotten the last verses of Surah Jumu'a which say that while the Holy Prophet was busy in delivering his Friday sermon a party of merchants arrived and on the beating of the drum, many of the people detached themselves from the congregation and swarmed round the merchants and only a few of the people remained there to listen to the Holy Prophet. Was leaving the Holy Prophet under such circumstances a correct thing?

Novel Forms of Tyrannies and Oppression

Imam Ali was subjected to continuous oppressions. From the time the Holy Prophet asked for the pen and paper and was insolently rebuffed the Holy Imam after the Prophet's demise, had been treated with excessive tyranny up to his last days. Let me be allowed to say that even up to the present time the position of Imam Ali has not been recognized and he remains still as the oppressed one. His words compiled in Nahjul Balaghah has also not been truly understood. Therefore, oppression to him was not confined to his lifetime only but it spreads round the entire period of history.

The persecutions that our infallible Imams had to suffer were from external sources as well as from their own unworthy people. The oppressions that were done to Imam Ali were not worth complaining because by that the very foundation of the Islamic government would have been demolished and, therefore, he kept patient like one who had a thorn in his eyes or whose throat was choked with a bone.

The oppression that was done to the Holy Imam was not by heart, speech, action, or pen alone, but it was of all types which are beyond description. The oppression that was done to our Holy Imam was done in the name of religion and for the purpose of securing the proximity with

Allah, so much so that the people in their sermons, on the pulpit, publicly and privately, and even in prayers used to abuse him.

The oppression that was done to our Holy Imams was from the same source which they had obtained from them (the Imams) as they obtained strength, knowledge and position from them and used the same on them. The oppression to the Holy Imams was done by unwise friends as well as by wise enemies. On the one hand there were timid, ignorant and foolish friends and on the other there were clever and hypocritical enemies.

Oppression by Pen

It is not known as to why many famous scholars from Ahlus Sunnah who were contemporaries of Imam Musa Kazim never cared to quote any tradition of the Holy Prophet from his source. Was Imam Musa Kazim not better than an ordinary narrator?

I also cannot understand that why an important book like Sahih Bukhari of Ahlus Sunnah which also includes many traditions originating from the Kharijites, and which contains traditions from over a hundred anonymous writers, and which gives them the stamp of authenticity does not quote any tradition of the Holy Prophet from Imam Ja'far Sadiq and the Holy Imams who followed him? Do all people not know that the Holy Prophet introduced to the people his ahlul bayt together with the Holy Qur'an?

Leaving aside these differences which are too many, we should overlook them and become united against our common enemy. There are differences of opinion on religious matters among Ahlus Sunnah also, and so they are among the Shi'ah scholars, but these differences should not become the bone of contention and the seed of discord as the flame of disunity and discord may engulf the Ummah in a devastating inferno.

Allegations Against the Shi'ah

It is also not understood why the people do not restrain themselves from impugning the Shi'ah and levelling false allegations against them. In reply to these innumerable allegations and calumnies that have been levelled against the Shi'ah we have defended our faith in the pages of thousands of books and in the Masjids and this humble writer, who is just a mere student, has also defended our faith on the Iran Radio and television and which I still repeat. I mean:

(i) That the Shi'ah do not believe that the Holy Qur'an has been tampered with.

(ii) That the Shi'ah do not consider their infallible Holy Imams as deities.

(iii) That the Shi'ah do not consider Bahais and Babis (followers of Bahaullah and Muhammad Ali Bab) as Shi'ah.

(iv) That the Shi'ah do not consider it obligatory to act upon the four books (al-Kafi, Man la yahzaruhul Faqih, Tahzib andIstabsar) though they consider them good among the good books but they do not believe that whatever is written in them is irrefutable.

(v) That the Shi'ah do not consider all the companions of the Holy Prophet as renegades and apostate but they believe that just as during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet there were true Muslims and the hypocrites also in the same way they also existed after the passing away of the Holy

Prophet. The passing away of the Holy Prophet cannot make the hypocrites as true believers. Thus, those, who claim that all the companions of the Holy Prophet were true believers and just, should tell us as to where the hypocrites of the time of the Holy Prophet disappeared.

Is It Possible For People to Give up Truth?

Those who have the understanding of the letter and spirit of the Holy Qur'an know it quite well that the people abandoned Prophet Harun, the brother of Prophet Musa and an accredited Prophet as well, and started worshipping the Calf.

In fact, as long as greed, desires, Devil and Satanic whisperings exist, there will be danger and disruption.

Why People are Distracted From Truth Despite Their Good Deeds?

The Holy Qur'an has answered this question because it does not want simply ritual worship, but it requires obedience and submission to Allah .Iblis (Lucifer, the rebel angel) worshipped Allah for thousands of years, but when the stage of affirming obedience to Allah came he became a rebel. The Holy Qur'an mentions the nullification of virtuous deeds. Is it not a fact that Bal'am Ba'aur was deprived of Allah's Mercy and became the target of Allah's wrath?

The consequence of bad deeds is a terrific affair and it frightens everybody. We know that Prophet Yusuf was thrown into a well, was made a slave and was imprisoned, but he never felt any danger, and when he reached the high position of rulership, he implored Allah to let him die as a Muslim and never to let him go astray. Hence the consequence of any action is the main thing. Prophet Isa said, "In my view the basis of a work is not the first but the last thing which gives us wages".

Conformity Between the Shi'ah and Ahlus Sunnah

If you happen to study a large number of books of the Shi'ah and Ahlus Sunnah, you will note that practically all the attributes and virtues of Imam Ali that the Shi'ah speak of are narrated by the scholars of Ahlus Sunnah, and if the Shi'ah have criticized some companions of the Holy Prophet the same criticisms are found in the books of Ahlus Sunnah also.

Lawful and Unlawful Guardianship

The Unlawful Guardianship: The Holy Qur'an has laid great emphasis on the subject of leadership, including its good as well as bad aspects. In regard to the good aspect of leadership the Holy Qur'an has made the obeying of the Holy Prophet and the men of lawful authority obligatory side by side with the obeying of Allah.

It has also recommended the obedience to the jurists with the obedience of Allah, His Holy Prophet and the men authorized by them. That is to say, "If someone flouts the decrees of the qualified jurists he has actually flouted the commands of the Holy Prophet and the Imam, and has committed polytheism". (Wasa'ilush Shi'ah, vol. XVIII, p. 99)

It will not be out of place to list the type of the people who should not be the leader of various groups and Imam of the people, and the people should

not obey them. In fact any sensible man with an ordinary intelligence free from any pressure or influence, will naturally understand that such people do not have the qualities of leadership.

But since the Holy Qur'an is the Book of Warning it puts mankind on the alert against all dangers. Thus we reproduce below some of the verses which are pertinent to the subject under discussion:

Do not follow him whose heart We have made oblivious to Our remembrance, who follows his own lust and exceeds the bound. (Surah al-Kahf, 18.28)

Do not comply with those who deny the truth. Do not heed a contemptible swearer. Or backbiter, calumniator, Slanderer. Who hinders men from doing good, the transgressor, the iniquitous. Crude, and above all, mean and infamous. (Surah al-Qalam, 68:8-13)

And do not follow any sinner or disbeliever among them.(Surah ad-Dahr, 76:24)

Do not follow those who are extravagant. (Surah ash-Shuara, 26.151)

And do not follow the way of mischief-makers. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:142)

And do not follow the wishes of the ignorant. (Surah al-Jathiya, 45:18)

And follow not the wishes of a people who had erred before, and led many others astray, and wandered away from the right path. (Surah al-Mai'dah, 5:77)

From the above-quoted verses of the Holy Qur'an, it becomes crystal clear that how certain people and the group of people are excluded from leadership on account of their sins, extravagance, quarrelsomeness, ignorance, transgression, infidelity, meanness and debased nature. Thus we understand that an Imam should be free from all these ills.

Similarly, in other verses of the Holy Qur'an the rulership of the Jews and the Christians over the Muslims has been made unlawful and similar is the case with the enemies of Allah, the hypocrites, and those who exercise unlawful authority in the name of religion. The Holy Qur'an says:

You will see among them many who rush into sin and wickedness, and devour unlawful gain. How evil are the things they do! (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:62)

Who is the Qualified Leader and Guardian?

The Holy Qur'an says:

Believers, obey Allah, His Messenger and your qualified leaders. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:59)

Can the work of the qualified leaders not be in conformity with the commands of Allah and His Messenger according to this verse of the Holy Qur'an? Can it be possible that in one strain we are told to obey Allah and His Messenger and not to oppose them, and in another it is suggested that we should follow the leaders who, day in and day out, are flouting the instructions of Allah and the Holy Prophet? Is such a discrepancy in the same verse be reconciled?

Indeed, the qualified leaders should only be the infallible Imams whose obedience is the obedience of Allah and the Holy Prophet and in whose knowledge and actions there are no contradictions whatsoever. If the leader happens to be the one other than the infallible Imam then in fact it will not

be incumbent on us to follow that person but it will be conditional as it is in the case of obedience to parents on certain conditions.

The explanation of this is that the people are enjoined to obey their parents and to treat them nicely but not in all conditions. That is if the parents want to distract their children from the belief in monotheism, in that case they should not obey their parents. The Holy Qur'an says.

We have enjoined on man to be kind to his parents; but if they try to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. (Surah al-Ankabut, 29:8)

If they try to force you to associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them (Surah Luqman, 31:15)

Hence, it becomes clear that obedience to parents is not necessary on every occasion; it is necessary on occasions where they do not force their children to oppose the commands of Allah. But obedience to the qualified leader is incumbent at every place and on every occasion.

From the point of view of the Holy Qur'an, obedience to the qualified leaders is unconditional because these are the persons who do not err nor do they misguide or mislead their followers.

Thus according to the Holy Qur'an the qualified leaders are those infallible Imams whose number according to 300 traditions narrated by both Shi'ah and the Ahlus Sunnah scholars is twelve.

Guardianship of the Jurists (fuqaha)

The guardianship of the Jurists is the process of continuity of Imamate. In this context according to several hundred traditions of the Holy Prophet which have been narrated by accredited companions of the Holy Prophet the number of infallible Imams is twelve.

Eleven of the twelve exalted personages have been martyred after him through poisoning or with swords because they fought against the despots of their times. Our twelfth Imam, Imam Mahdi is in occultation and according to hundreds of reliable traditions he will reappear by Allah's command to establish a just government. Since people have not been able to accept his leadership, Allah has kept him in His Protection until an opportune time.

As for example when a certain government lights eleven lamps and the people extinguish them it will preserve the last lamp at a safe place and will not light it until people become so much mature and enlightened that they understand the utility of light.

Similarly when Allah sent eleven infallible Imams and the people tortured them, made them captives and martyred them, Allah has kept the twelfth Imam in His safe custody until the opportune time. On the other hand Allah has not left us to ourselves without guidance during the period of occultation of the twelfth Imam Mahdi but He has entrusted us to just, pious and virtuous jurists so that we may faithfully follow them.

Therefore, it is incumbent on all Muslims to protect the Islamic system and obey the commands of Allah which the just jurists issue.

Islam has such rules and regulations in different fields of activities, financial, economic, punitive, administrative and judicial that these cannot remain suspended, nor can they be controlled by ignorant and selfish people.

Islam does not allow that a particular group of persons may start ruling the other. Thus Islam has entrusted the job of enforcing the rules and regulations to the jurists and pious people only so that they may issue decrees in accordance with the Divine Commandments. The obedience to these jurists by the people is as obligatory as it is to the Holy Prophet and the Infallible Imam.

The Role of the Jurist

Now a number of questions arise here. Do the Muslims need some system of Government? Should an Islamic State be protected and defended or not? Should the lands be safeguarded? Should laws be promulgated in an Islamic State?

Should the right of the oppressed be restored to him? Should or should not the voice of Islam reach every nook and corner of the world? Were the teachings of the Prophets and the Imams confined to their time only or were they applicable to all places and all times?

If the answer to these questions is in the affirmative and Islam has its own system of social structure and laws and regulations, and the rights should be honoured, and the land should be safeguarded then the form of government must be Islamic, because without a system based on just and correct lines, especially when the enemies of Islam have a big farcically alluring system with them, we cannot protect our religion, laws, country, life, property and honour.

If the government is necessary then the ruler is also necessary, because the government cannot be run without a ruler. Therefore, since Islam needs a government for enforcing its laws, we should find out the qualifications of the ruler and know whether he has a deep understanding of the Divine commandments, is just and competent, and can appreciate and face difficulties.

If it is necessary that the ruler should be a true Muslim, well-informed, pious, virtuous and statesman, then that person must be a jurist, and his government will be called the government of the jurist.

Those, who do not believe in the concept of the guardianship of a jurist should study the following view-points and accept anyone of them.

(i) Islam is confined only to prayers, fasting, individual worship, moral values only and it does not envisage the solution of social problems, justice, political and economic problems.

(ii) Islam was only meant for the duration of the lifetime of the Holy Prophet only, and it was abandoned after him and now its important social problems are confined only in books.

(iii) Important social laws should be enforced by the ignorant and wicked persons only.

If none of the above-quoted view-points is acceptable or appeals to reason, then we must accept the guardianship of the jurist, which means that the enforcement of Islamic laws and solution of difficult problems should be solved by eminent Muslim scholars and thus we must not think that the guardianship of the jurist is unjustifiable.

Is it not narrated from Imam Ja'far Sadiq that "in the Holy Qur'an all the individual and collective needs of the society have been described". (al-Kafi, vol. I, p. 59)

Hence, are the government, ruler, administration and various fields of human activities not included among the important needs of the society?

The Holy Prophet said, "I am grateful to Allah that I have described all the requirements of the Ummah before my death".

Is there not the need of a ruler and the government during the occultation period of Imam Mahdi in the Islamic society?

Imam Ali Riza while dealing with the problem of guardianship says, "There is no nation which is without its leader and the social structure of a society is directly concerned with the leader and that people should manage the public treasury by keeping an account of its income and expenditure, organize the society, fight against the enemies and protect the society from internal dissensions and disunity. If there is not going to be any such leader, then the nation will break up into pieces and the Divine commandments and the teachings of the Holy Prophet will be tampered with at the command of despotic ruler". (Biharul Anwar, vol. VI, p. 60)

You will note that the question of leadership and the government has been stated to be the most important problem by Imam Ali Riza. It is obvious that for the benefit of the poor masses management of the public treasury, equitable distribution of wealth, struggle against enemies, administration of social institutions are not such that they are only concerned with the time of the previous infallible Imams and that the Ummah should be left to itself during the occultation of our living Imam Mahdi that is to say, there should be no need of a government or a ruler during the period of occultation.

Thus Islam acknowledges the existence of the society and the necessity of the government and its ruler, but what is important is that we should know the conditions and qualifications of the ruler, and what type of the government it should be and how it should carry on the administration.

According to common sense and keeping in view the various Islamic narrations, the responsibility of the government should be laid on the shoulders of the just jurist. We reproduce here excerpts from some narrations:

(i) The Holy Prophet considered the jurists as his caliph. 506

(ii) The living Imam Mahdi with his own hand wrote in reply to a letter: "You should refer to our narrators about your problems and difficulties for they are our argument and proof on you just as we are the argument and proof of Allah".

(iii) When Imam Ja'far Sadiq was asked about the problems which are referred to despotic administration for decision he said, "Referring to these departments is very bad because it is referring to the despot and if someone gets back his right from these despotic departments it becomes unlawful.

On such occasions however, it is your duty to refer to those people who know our teachings and narrations fully well, because I declare them as the qazi (Judge) for you. Thus you should remember that if this jurist has given you his decision and you consider it worthless it is as if you have considered

the Divine command as worthless. If anyone disobeys these jurists, it is as if he has disobeyed us, and whosoever disobeys us, has in fact disobeyed Allah and this action amounts to polytheism".

(iv) The Holy Prophet said, "Scholars are the successors of the Prophets". (Wasa'il, vol. XVIII, chapter 11)

(v) Imam Kazim said "Jurists are the fortresses of Islam". (Kitabal Bai', Ayatullah Khumayni)

(vi) Allah has taken an assurance from the scholars that they would not pass over the gluttony and oppression of the despots in silence and would not ignore the hunger of the poor. (Sermon 7, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

Naturally in a society supporting the oppressed and crushing the tyrant do need a government or its operative agency.

(vii) In the Holy Qur'an we have been taught that in a society we should stick to justice. Can justice in a society be maintained without the existence of a government or a ruler?

(viii) Imam Husayn says, "Discharging of the duties and the enforcement of laws should be in the hands of the scholars, God-fearing and pious persons. These are the people who do not make any changes in the Divine commands pertaining to lawful and unlawful things, and who are the custodians of trusts". (Tuhaful 'Uqul, p. 242)

(ix) Imam Ali says, "Scholars are the rulers of the people". (Ghurarul Hikam, quoted from al-Hayat, vol. II, p. 293)

Thus it is deduced that in an Islamic society the head of the government should be a just jurist with all the prescribed qualifications. These very jurists are the authorized representatives of the infallible Imams during the period of the occultation of our living Imam Mahdi. If the authority and guardianship of the jurist is terminated, the despots would raise their heads and the Divine commandments will be altered.

It is not known as to what is the objective of those people who oppose the jurist?

• Do they say that for Muslims no government and no administration is necessary?

• Do they say that some system is necessary but there is no necessity of an administrator, ruler or guardian?

• Do they say that guardians and the rulers of the people should be those who have no concern with Islam?

• Do they say that the ruler should be a jurist and Muslim but it is not necessary that he should be just and pious?

• Do they consider that guardianship of the jurist is some sort of a dominating force? Is the jurist a representative of a particular group or class of people?

• Does the selfishness of the jurist not nullify his sense of justice and fair-play by which his guardianship in the society will automatically cease to exist?

Is the acceptance of the jurist's guardianship tantamount to setting up various centres of authority and domination?

When it is meant that the laws and commandments which have passed through the channel of a just jurist may not be diverted to divergent and un-

Islamic directions, their representatives are delegated all the powers to exercise their authority on their behalf. Hence there is no question of setting up independent centres of authority and power, as actually the authority and power only emanate from the Divine commands which are enforced by the just jurist only.

We would ask those who oppose the guardianship of the jurist as to whom they want to entrust the affairs of the Ummah? We ask whether the Muslims should not follow someone in their affairs or is their following restricted to worship of Allah only? Is there not the possibility of a lawful or an unlawful thing in matters of social problems such as strikes, rehabilitation, travels, disputes, agreements, pacts, appointments, dismissal etc.?

Should we not follow some jurist in all those matters where there is a question of lawfulness and unlawfulness? Should the leadership of the Muslims be entrusted to an un-Islamic leader? Will it not be like handing over the administration of a medical college to a man who is not a physician himself?

Is the handing over of the Ummah to an unjust ruler not a great injustice to humanity?

Has the time not come when we should protect ourselves from false leadership, unscrupulous politicians and professional opportunists, we should come under the Islamic protection, and accept only that leadership, which is compatible with the standard laid down by Qur'anic revelations.

However, the topic of Imamate has become a little lengthy but it would have been an injustice if we had not dealt with the leadership of the people and its way and means during the occultation period of our present Imam Mahdi.

The Day of Resurrection

Every man out of his natural disposition has some conception of the Day of Resurrection because there is no one who would not like to know the ultimate future of man and of this world, where the life's struggle of man ends and what the real purpose of life is?

We have two answers to this question as follows:

(i) All the Divine religions according to the arguments, we shall advance at a later stage, have an optimistic view of the future of man and this world. The Holy Qur'an says:

To your Lord will all things eventually return. (Surah an-Najm, 53:42)

(ii) The materialistic views consider that this world and the man will ultimately be annihilated. This is a very dangerous and disappointing view and besides those who hold such a view do not have any convincing argument. In this context, the Holy Qur'an says:

They say, 'The only life is this worldly life and here we shall live and die. It is only time which annihilates us'. They have no knowledge about this. It is only their speculations. (Surah al-Jathiyah, 45:24)

Natural Arguments

There are some people who do not admit by their tongue the Resurrection Day but subconsciously they feel man's eternal existence. Sometimes they themselves give out indications to show that despite death and the physical destruction of the body they do not consider that man would ultimately perish. We give below some examples of these indications:

(i) All those who do not believe in Resurrection hold in reverence the graves of their ancestors.

(ii) These people name their roads, institutions, universities and schools after the names of their dead ones.

(iii) These people wish that after their death they should be remembered with a good name.

(iv) These people name their children after the names of their ancestors.

(v) These people mummify the dead bodies of their dear ones so as to protect them from putrefaction.

If those who deny Resurrection and think that death annihilates man what is then the argument with them for such thinking? When they mean death to be annihilation why then do they erect mausoleums for their dead and lay wreaths on their graves?

Obviously such things point to the fact that those who do not believe in Resurrection do have some taint belief in their heart of hearts about the eternal existence of man's soul by which it is meant that by death man's being is not destroyed. We elaborate this point a little more.

If people consider death to be total destruction then why do the various nations and races name their children after the names of their forefathers and why do they feel proud of them? And if somebody kicks the grave of their father why do they quarrel with him? Why do they erect magnificent mausoleums? Why some tribes bury ornaments, weapons and garments alongwith the dead ones?

True, man has in his heart a feeling of an eternal existence of man and by one way or the other considers the good name in history as a sign of satisfaction. On the other hand man has a feeling of estrangement as this world is very limited and narrow for him. He gets himself involved in his wife, children, wealth and property and other enjoyments of life.

But after a time in his heart he misses something as despite all his comforts he does not seem to be fully satisfied. Sometimes he wants to end his life and sometimes he asks himself a question as to what is the purpose of his existence and for what he has been created. All this vague feeling of restlessness points to the fact that man feels himself estranged in this world.

Despite its vast expanse this world seems to him a narrow alley; his body is like a bird's cage and the world a prison to him. This sort of feeling is based on the conviction that one day he will be satisfied and all his wishes and goals will be fulfilled because for every feeling, want and internal restlessness there lies an answer in external source as for example the sensation of thirst is removed by drinking water, and of sexual desire by cohabitation with his spouse and the feeling of estrangement by the thought of Resurrection.

Guidance to Right Arguments

Man's every natural feeling can be answered in two ways:

(i) Timely wrong answer.

(ii) Everlasting correct answer.

Example: A thirsty man can be given water or he can be shown a mirage also. Similarly, a hungry baby can be satisfied by suckling or he can be given a rubber nipple to soothe him.

Thus every natural sensation or feeling can be treated in two different ways, real and permanent one, or artificial and temporary one. Imam Ali says, "The Merciful Allah appointed Muhammad (peace be upon him and his descendants) as His trustworthy messenger and entrusted him with the mission of converting people from idolatry to the worship of Allah and guiding them to obey Him instead of obeying the Satan".

Indeed there exists in man a basic desire for love and worship. If man's internal predisposition had not been diverted to the right path, he would have plunged himself into the darkness of superstition.

Answers that Prophets Give: So far we have said that man has a feeling of his existence and wishes it to continue. This feeling should be given a true and permanent support. Now we should see what the Prophets say in this regard and we reproduce their pronouncements with their arguments.

Allah's Message Through Prophets

The Holy Qur'an says:

Do you think We created you for nothing, and that you will not return to Us? (Surah al-Mo'minun, 23:115)

And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should worship Me. (Surah az-Zariyat, 51: 56)

Do you not see that Allah has made subservient to you whatever is in the earth and the ships running in the ocean by His commands. (Surah al-Hajj 22:65)

Whoever has done an atom 's weight of good, will see it and whoever has done an atom's weight of evil, will also see it.(Surah az-Zilzal, 99:7, 8)

Every soul is entangled in what it does. (Surah Muddaththir, 74: 38)

Don 't follow that of which you have no knowledge. Verily the ear, the eye, and the heart, each will be questioned.(Surah Bani Isra'il, 17: 36)

Allah may reward them with the best of what they have done. (Surah at-Tauba, 9:121)

These are the view-points that the Prophets have put forward in relation to Resurrection and each one of them has some logical reasoning which we shall discuss later. But at this moment it is better to see whether the Resurrection (coming back to life again) will actually happen or not, or whether it is possible from the point of view of common sense. Thus when we understand that there is a possibility of such a happening, then we shall look into the reasonings and argument for Resurrection as only its possibility is not sufficient, for nothing can happen unless there is reason for its happening. Thirdly we shall see whether there is some obstruction in the way of Resurrection.

Coming of the Dead to Life is Not Impossible

No one has up to this time put forward any argument to show that Resurrection will not happen. Those who do not believe in Resurrection harp on the same old tune saying how a dead one can come to life when his body has decomposed and each and every part of it has decayed and reduced to dust.

To this, according to common sense and according to the Holy Qur'an, the answer is that it can happen as it is not impossible. This thing comes to our imagination and we come across day and night examples of the dead coming to life again.

Imam Muhammad Taqi, says, "Sleeping and waking are the two best examples by which we can fully comprehend the issue of dying and coming back to life. Death is nothing more than a long slumber".

Secondly it can be seen when the trees sprout in the spring and die in the autumn. The Holy Qur'an says:

Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the cloud, then We bring forth therewith fruits of various colours, and in the mountains are streaks, white and red, of various hues and (others) intensely black? (Surah Fatir, 35:27)

A sustenance for the creatures and We give life thereby to a dead land; thus will be the resurrection. (Surah Qaf, 50:11)

In short, day in and day out we come across the incidence of coming into life of the dead things, which makes the issue of resurrection though seemingly a difficult one, easy and simple to comprehend.

A Memorable Incident of the Holy Qur'an

A man extracted a piece of bone from underneath a wall and after pulverizing it brought to the Holy Prophet and putting on airs insolently said: "Who can bring back this decayed and powdered bone to life?" Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

He has said, 'Who will give life to the bones which have become ashes'. (Muhammad), tell him, 'He who gave them life in the first place will bring them back to life again. He has the best knowledge of all creatures '. (Surah Ya Sin, 36:78, 79)

If a maker of something says that he can re-assemble the broken parts of his product he will not be in the wrong because making a thing is more difficult than assembling its parts.

The deniers of Resurrection had doubts about two things:

(i) "How can decayed bones come to life?" The Holy Qur'an says:

He has said, 'Who will give life to the bones which have become ashes? (Surah Ya Sin, 36:78)

(ii) If the powdered bones are accepted to come to life again then who will return them to life? The Holy Qur'an says:

(Muhammad), tell him, 'He Who gave them life in the first place will bring them back to life again'. (Surah Ya Sin, 36:79)

If a brick-maker claims that after pulverizing the brick he can re-make it, can anybody doubt it? Certainly not.

Why do these people who consider the decomposed parts of the dead coming back to life as a very strange phenomenon not doubt the very creation of their life? Obviously to create life in the first instance is more difficult than to re-create it. Is it more difficult to make an air-plane or to re-assemble it after dismantling it?

If a maker of planes claims that he can disintegrate its parts and then re-assemble it, can anybody doubt his statement? No, certainly not, because re-assembling the parts is easier than making a thing. Thus when one accomplishes a difficult task he can also do the easier one but for Almighty Allah nothing is difficult. The Holy Qur'an says:

And He it is Who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and it is easy to Him, and His are the most exalted attributes in the heavens and the earth, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. (Surah ar-Rum, 30:27)

Other Examples in Proof of Resurrection

In support of the proof that coming of the dead to life again is not a difficult or impossible thing, the Holy Qur'an has provided many examples and among them are the two incidents related to Prophet Uzayr and Prophet Ibrahim.

(i) Once Prophet Uzayr, while on a journey, passed through a deserted place, and there he thought to himself, not by way of disbelief but out of inquisitiveness: 'How will Allah bring them back to life after they have been dead for so many years?"

The Almighty Allah kept him dead for 100 years and after reviving him asked, "How long have you been here?" The Prophet replied, "Half an hour or so" Allah said, "No, you have been here for 100 years. Now you look at your donkey, your animal of riding and also your food that you had with you.

Now wonder at the Greatness and Power of Allah, how your donkey died and perished into dust and the food which should have decayed in a day or two is still fresh after 100 years. Now if you want to witness the coming of the dead into life again you may look at the decayed bones of the donkey

from which We will bring it back to life again fully intact with its skin, flesh and soul, so that it may serve as a good lesson for the coming generations". (Vide: Surah al-Baqarah, 2:259)

As soon as Prophet Uzayr saw his donkey coming back to life and the food remaining fresh for 100 years he exclaimed, "I know Allah has the Power to do every thing".

(ii) Once Prophet Ibrahim was passing by the bank of a river when he saw a corpse, one portion of which was in water and the other was on the ground. The land and marine animals and birds flocked round it, and every animal was eating practically every bit of the dead body.

Prophet Ibrahim after seeing this asked Allah, "How will you bring back the dead to life on the Day of Judgement when this corpse has almost been eaten up by the animals and it has been assimilated in their bodies as their integral part". Allah asked Prophet Ibrahim, "Do you have no faith in My Power and belief in resurrection".

He replied, "Why not! But I want to satisfy myself by seeing this phenomenam with my own eyes". (Discussions and argumentation satisfy the mind while experience and observation satisfy the heart)

Allah then asked Prophet Ibrahim, "Take four different kinds of birds. Slaughter them and mix up their flesh together and put them on different mountains. Thereafter, call out each bird one by one and see for yourself how various portions of the mixed flesh get separated and go to bring back each bird in its original form".

Prophet Ibrahim did as he was directed. He slaughtered a pigeon, a chicken, a peacock and a crow, mixed up their flesh together in one whole put them on the top of ten different mountains. Then he called out each animal and each one of them appeared before him in its original form. (Vide Surah al-Baqarah, 2:260)

Infact, Prophet Ibrahim the chosen Messenger of Allah, is passed through special test and trial and is put on an exalted position while on the other hand there are people like us who have not even passed an initial stage of recognizing preliminary things as conviction, ascension etc.

We give some simple examples further to elaborate how scattered particles can form together to a complete being.

(i) A cow grazes grass which on assimilation yields milk.

(ii) A man eats a piece of bread which goes to form various component tissues and organs of his body. e.g. blood, bones, hair, nails, flesh etc.

(iii) Many cloths are made of fibres which are produced from petroleum.

(iv) When a metal is melted its impurities are separated in the foam.

(v) When milk or curd is churned its cream is separated on top.

Now you admit that the digestive function of a cow yields milk from grass. Many fibers from petroleum and cream from milk or curd can be obtained. But when you hear that Allah will shake the earth in a quake, the decayed bone particles wherever they are, will form together in original shape, you do not believe it! (Vide: Surah Zilzal, 99:1-2)

We quote here some more verses of the Holy Qur'an:

As He brought you forth in the beginning, so shall you also return. (Surah al-A'raf, 7 29)

And certainly you know the first creation, then why do you not reflect? (Surah al-Waqi'a, 56:62)

Let man reflect from what he was made of: He was created of spurting water issuing from the loins and ribs, Allah has the Power to resurrect him. (Surah at-Tariq, 86:5-8)

Does man think that he will be left to himself, alone? Wasn't he once just an emitted drop of semen? Then formed into an embryo? Then he fashioned, shaped and proportioned and assigned it sexes, male and female. Doesn't He then have the power to bring the dead back to life. (Surah al-Qiyamah, 75:36-40)

Did We fail to accomplish the first creation? And yet they are still in doubt about a new creation. We created man and surely know what doubts arise in his mind. (Surah Qaf, 50:15)

Don't they realize that Allah Who has created the heavens and the earth has the power to create the like of them? There is no doubt that He has fixed a term for them. Even then the wicked turn away in disbelief (from Our Revelation). (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:99)

Does not man remember that before We created him he was nothing? (Surah Mar yam, 19:67)

Though we are giving proofs from the Holy Qur'an yet it advises us to apply our wisdom and reasoning. Can anybody still be in doubt after seeing the clear proof of Allah's doing all the year round?

Since our discussion requires brevity and simplicity we are not quoting other examples that are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, for instance the story about the People of the Cave (ashabul kahaf) and of that young man who awoke from his sleep after 309 years.

We have said that there are three stages of any work that is to be performed. First the possibility of its happening, which we have already dealt with.

Now comes the second stage which pertains to the cause of that happening, that is, the proof of Resurrection, because the possibility of coming back to life is not sufficient. For instance man can perform many functions and there is a possibility of their performance too, but he needs the cause and justification for that also.

It is possible for everybody to drink water but unless we feel thirsty we do not take it. Similarly other things, talking, walking and some other similar work that are possible, but we do not do them unless we have some reason to do them.

Thus every possible work needs the justification for its being done. At this point we will very briefly discuss the reasons for Resurrection because on this subject numerous books have been written in detail. May Allah bless the writers as well as the readers of those books.

The First Proof of Resurrection is Allah's Justice

We can give proofs of Resurrection which are in accord with human intelligence and the Holy Qur'an. One of those proofs is that since Allah is Just, Resurrection must be there. If there is no Resurrection, Allah's Justice will be in question. The explanation of this is that in the presence of the commandments of Allah and the Prophets there are two groups of people,

the first group is in favour and the second is in opposition. The Holy Qur'an says:

He it is who created you, but one of you is an unbeliever and another of you is a believer, and Allah sees what you do. (Surah at-Taghabun, 64:2)

On the other side suppose no reward or punishment is given for one's deeds in this world, or the punishment is so meager that it is not felt at all. However, sooner or later everyone has to depart from this world.

Therefore, if there is going to be no accounting for the deeds and no reward or punishment is given in another place, that is, on the Day of Judgement, and everything is forgotten after death, then where does Allah's Justice stand? If Allah is Just and there is no recompense or punishment for our deeds in this world then it must be awarded in some another place. We now quote a question and its answer here.

Question: Why does Allah not reward or punish in this world? Was it not better to have this matter settled quickly by rewarding or punishing in this world and in that way there would have been no necessity of the Day of Judgement?

There can be several answers to this question but we give a few here.

(i) Since by inflicting punishment in this world others also can be affected; therefore it would become a kind of cruelty. The explanation of this is like this: Suppose I slapped a man on his face and Allah paralyzed my hand. When I go home my relations see my condition and they suffer agony though they have not been responsible for my fault.

This world is a place of mutual relationship and here others will be affected by my pleasures and agony. In that case if the punishment is awarded in this world, it will be an injustice. But on the Day of Judgement all relationships will be severed and everybody will be bothering for himself so much so that according to the Holy Qur'an man will avoid his wife and children and will only be worrying about his own salvation, and if the wrong doer is chastised there, nobody will be affected by it. It is just possible that you may now say that in this world no culprit should be punished because by this his dear and near ones would be affected.

The answer to this plea is that if a thief's hand is not chopped off or he is not flogged, the letting off of such bad characters will create panic and sense of insecurity in the society and this will also amount to cruelty because for the sake of the relatives of a criminal we plunge the entire society into a dangerous situation. Thus in that case it will be better that we should give priority to the well-being of the society over that of the individuals.

(ii) If Allah starts rewarding or punishing people in this world, people will become virtuous because of the fear of punishment but this will be out of expediency only. The real virtue lies in that man remains free and independent and then he commits no sin, otherwise if every farmer, mason, merchant or student performs any good deed and Allah rewards him with gardens, palatial homes, wealth, etc. then in that case everybody will become pious but there will be no value of such deeds.

Man's virtues lie in that he himself should decide for performing noble deeds without any deterrent factor or incentives otherwise hundreds and thousands of angels were already there to worship Allah. Allah has so

created man as to make him select for himself from two poles of desires a right path to follow.

Standard of Values in Islam

The Holy Qur'an basically praises those people who from two opposite paths, select for themselves the right path after suppressing their inordinate desires and ignoring glamorous way of life.

The Holy Qur'an mentions many instances such as on one side there is a handsome and youthful Prophet Yusuf and on the other side is Zulaykha in an inviting position, and, to crown all, the doors are also bolted from inside. But Prophet Yusuf after invoking Allah steps aside and saves himself from temptation. The Holy Qur'an says:

His master's wife then tried to seduce him. She locked the doors and said to him, "Come on " He said, 'I seek Allah 's refuge and Allah has given me good place of shelter. The unjust will certainly have no happiness'. (Surah Yusuf, 12:23)

Prophet Ibrahim at the age of 100 years yearned for having a son. He offered supplication and invoked Allah. Then Allah gave him a son, Ismai'l. Then came Allah's command: "O Ibrahim! Slaughter your son with your own hand in the way of Allah". Prophet Ibrahim on the one hand was under the natural pressure of his love for his son, and on the other hand he had to make a response to the Call of Allah.

He had to choose between these two things and ultimately he sacrificed his pressure of parental love for his child to the pleasure of Allah. That is the very exalted position of man before Allah. The Holy Qur'an narrates this event as follows.

And when he was old enough to go about with him, he said: 'O my son! I saw in a dream that I was sacrificing you. So what is your opinion?' He replied, O my father! Do as you are commanded. If Allah pleases, you will find me of the patients '. When they both submitted to the will of Allah he (Ibrahim) laid him (his son) down upon his forehead. And We called out to him saying, 'O Ibrahim! You have indeed confirmed your dream ' Thus do We reward the doers of good. (Surah as-Saffat, 37:102-105)

Self-sacrifice of Ahlul Bayt

Imam Ali and Lady Fatimtuz Zahra break their fast with water only and despite being intensely hungry, give away their food to the hungry ones. The Holy Qur'an praises their generosity as follows:

And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive. (Surah ad-Dahr, 76:8)

About those who at the dead of night despite deep sleep rouse from their beds and get themselves busy in supplicating and invoking the blessings of Allah, the Holy Qur'an says:

Their backs do not rest on their beds and pray to their Lord in fear and hope, and spend (benevolently) of what We have given them. (Surah as-Sajdah, 32:16)

They slept little in the night. And every morning they asked forgiveness. (Surah az-Zariyah, 51: 17,18)

In short the standard of one's deeds before Allah is that man should be quite free to choose for himself a righteous path despite having before him material interests and natural temptations, otherwise none of his deeds will be of any worth. Of course, if man keeps mum despite having a tongue and controls his anger, it is a good and valuable quality. If a man is dumb or he does not show his temper in ordinary circumstances it does him no credit.

A Reminder: You will pose a question that if in this world everybody gets his reward for his deeds they will out of fear turn virtuous, but this will be of no value. However there arises another question: "Would the promise of Paradise and warning of Hell not make people pious?"

The answer to this is: Since Paradise and the Hell are not before the people, man does not feel compulsion to become pious. There is a difference between a man who has got to pay his dues only tomorrow and a man who has to do this after several months. The first one is shaky and scared of, while the other one who has several months at his disposal feels relaxed.

In fact, from the human point of view there is a lot of difference between reward and punishment being awarded at once and those to be awarded after a lapse of time rather after a long time. Therefore, Allah has given relaxation in matter of awarding reward and punishment so that people should not get scared and should gradually overcome their inordinate desires and proceed to the Right Path of Allah.

To a question as to why Allah does not award us for our deeds in this very world, the answer is that because of diversities it is not possible. As for example what reward the Holy Prophet got for his great services to liberate the mankind from ignorance, superstitions, polytheism, disunity and dissensions? Do we have any better food than honey and roasted meat, and bed better than silk, or a transport better than an air-plane?

Are these foods, bed, and transport, not the same one which are enjoyed by sinners also? So what was the reward of the Holy Prophet? Is there any martyr who has laid down his life for a noble cause and whom you can compensate for his sacrifice?

Apart from this there are sinners and criminals who massacre hundreds and thousands of innocent people. How can you punish such a person with an appropriate punishment in this world? If, at most, he is sentenced to death; then it will be only one killing in place of massacres of hundreds and thousands of innocent people. What will become of the spilling of the blood of those innocent people?

Tooth for Tooth, Nail for Nail

Our discussion is that punishment in the next world shall be thorough and severer. This punishment should not exclude those punishments which are awarded to some in this world only. The Qur'anic verses tell us that Allah punishes some in this world. The Holy Qur'an says:

Corruption has spread over land and sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return to the right path. (Surah ar-Rum, 30:41)

They shall meet with disgrace in this world, and severe punishment in the Hereafter. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:114)

But in fact these punishments are just a part of the punishments which they will receive on the Day of Judgement.

It will be better to quote some more verses here:

Those who disregard their covenant with Allah after He has taken such a, pledge from them, who sever the proper relations that Allah has commanded them to establish, and those who spread evil in the land, will have Allah's condemnation instead of reward and will face the most terrible end. (Surah ar-Ra'd, 13:25)

And thus do We chastise him who is extravagant and does not believe in the signs of h is Lord; and certainly the chastisement of the Hereafter is severer and persistent.(Surah Ta Ha, 20:127)

We shall certainly make them suffer worldly torments before suffering the great torment so that perhaps they may return to Us. (Surah as-Sajdah, 32:21)

Turning away haughtily that he may lead (others) astray from the way of Allah, for him is disgrace in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection We will make him taste the punishment of burning. (Surah al-Hajj, 22:9)

We sent upon the people of 'Ad a violent wind during a few ill-fated days to make them suffer a disgraceful torment in this life. Their torment in the life to come will even be more disgraceful and they will not receive any help. (Surah Ha Min Sajdah, 41:16)

So far we have quoted those verses which tell us that Allah will make the sinners taste the punishment in the world also but the actual place for reward or punishment is the Day of Resurrection. In the traditions also we come across the worldly punishment. As for example we read in a tradition, "Those who wish ill of others themselves fall into the ditch of misfortune. Allah punishes those who treat their parents disgracefully, oppress the people and who are ungrateful in this world and He never puts it off for the Day of Resurrection". (Safinatul Bihar)

Examples of Worldly Punishments

It will not be out of place if we mention here a few examples of the punishments that are awarded in this world, though the real punishment will be awarded on the Day of Resurrection as this world is too small to account for awarding rewards and punishment here.

With regard to the bravery of the supporters of the Prophets and their steadfastness the Holy Qur'an says.

And whoever desires the reward in this world, We shall give it, and whoever desires the reward in the Hereafter, We shall do that. We shall certainly reward those who are grateful. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:145)

About Prophet Ibrahim the Holy Qur'an says.

And We gave him what is good in this world, and in the next he will most surely be among the good. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:122)

It also says about the Prophets' supporters and their help and assistance.

Most surely We help Our Messengers and those who believe, in this world's life and on the Day when the witnesses shall stand up. (Surah Mo'min, 40:51)

Perhaps we have drifted from our main topic but not too far. Yes, the main topic of discussion was as to why in this world one is not wholly

rewarded or punished. We have now reached the answer to the third question that the worldly punishments are just a part of the main punishments that will be awarded on the Day of Resurrection.

You have now known answers to the three questions regarding the punishments that are not given in this world. Now we come to the fourth answer of this question which we derive from the Holy Qur'an. It says.

Was Allah to seize people immediately for their injustice, no living creature would be left on earth. He gives them respite for an appointed time. When their term is over, they will not be able to change the inevitable. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:61)

Were Allah to punish people for their deeds immediately, not one creature would have survived on earth. However, He has given them a respite for an appointed time, and when their term comes to an end, let it be known that Allah watches over His servants. (Surah Fatir, 35:45)

Thus the Wisdom and Will of Allah lie in that a creature like man should remain alive as a free and independent being for a limited period of time so that the disobedient may also get some respite otherwise if such disobedient persons were to be killed there would remain no living person on earth. After all is there one, who has not disobeyed Allah, and is the punishment for his disobedience and insolence lesser than death?

Though the worldly punishments are meant to serve as a warning, yet if every sinner receives his punishment in full it will amount to lack of Allah's Grace and Blessings for it is just possible that a sinner may one day repent and seek forgiveness and give up disobedience to the commands of Allah and unravel the truth which he has so far hidden.

We have seen many sinners or heard of them that they repented of their sins before death and changed their ways. Therefore, is it not proper and fair that man who is so weak and prone to inordinate desires and is apt to be prey to evil forces, be granted a respite so as to make amends for his bad deeds at the last moment and it may be just possible that his heart may become enlightened like esteemed Hur who had gone to fight against Imam Husayn but without losing any time he changed his mind and decided to fight against the enemies of the Holy Imam in the plain of Karbala?

Though it is certain that some people may take wrong advantage of this respite but still this will help the Muslims generally. Therefore, it is the Blessings and the Grace of Allah that man should not be punished in this world so that he may seek forgiveness of his sins before death comes to him.

The rewards and punishments will only be justifiable if we consider not only the deeds but their causes also. The Holy Qur'an says:

It is We Who bring the dead to life and record man 's deeds and their consequences. We keep everything recorded in an illustrious Book. (Surah Ya Sin, 36.12)

Suppose a man abruptly came into a meeting and after extinguishing the lamp ran away. There cannot be any severe punishment for extinguishing the lamp. Instead, a slap on his face will be a sufficient punishment, perhaps. But here it is to be seen what problems this extinguishing of the lamp would have caused?

Maybe the carpet on the floor could catch fire by the falling of the lamp. Somebody might injure someone with a knife or some weapon. Someone might fall down from the staircase. Someone could strike his head against the wall. Some utensils could fall down from the table and get broken. So on and so forth. If we catch hold of the culprit, the problem before us would not be the mere extinguishing of the lamp but the justice would demand to assess the damage that this act might have caused. After citing this example we now come to the main discussion.

When someone introduces the use of harmful drug like heroin, or a life-saving medicine like an antibiotic it will not be fair to reward or punish such a person immediately. We should wait until the end of the world to know to what extent heroin caused damage by taking the life of the people and to what extent the other drug benefited the sick people. Thereafter, we should think of giving recompense.

Similarly if a man by means of a film strip, book or a cassette or any other such thing causes damage for a considerable length of time in that case we should not be in haste but should wait until the end of the world to assess its evil or good effects. This thing not only appeals to reason but it is justified also according to twelfth verse of Surah Yasin just quoted above as well as the traditions.

In the traditions also we read as follows: "If someone initiates a useful practice or sets a precedent for something good he will be sharing the reward with the people who will be following it, but because of this sharing the people's share will not be reduced. Similarly if a person sows the seeds of discord or makes the people deviate from the right path, the people will be sinners of course but the one, who initiated an evil, will, besides being the sinner himself, bear the burden of the other sinners also". (Safinatul Bihar, vol. II, p. 261)

In short, the first proof of Resurrection is the Justice of Allah. That is from three following premises it is proved that the coming of the Day of Resurrection is just in accordance with Justice of Allah:

(i) Regarding the commandments of Allah and the Prophets people are divided into two groups the followers and the dissenters.

(ii) From the six answers that we have already given, this world is not the place for rewards and punishments.

(iii) It has been established without doubt by logical reasonings that Allah is Just and He will definitely reward or punish the people for their deeds and, therefore, there must be some day for it, and that is the Day of Resurrection.

The First Proof-Justice of Allah

There are many Qur'anic verses which ask the human intellect and conscience whether good and bad people are alike or there is a difference between the two. The Holy Qur'an says

Shall We treat those who believe and do good like the mischief-makers on the earth? Or shall We make those who guard against evil like the wicked? (Surah Sad, 38:28)

What! shall We then make those who submit as the guilty?(Surah al-Qalam, 68:35)

Is he then who is a believer like him who is a transgressor? They are never equal. (Surah as-Sajdah, 32:18)

Nay! do those who have wrought evil deeds think that We will make them like those who believe and do good that their life and their death shall be equal? Evil is that they judge (Surah al-Jathiya, 45:21)

We have mentioned some Qur'anic verses in the chapter on Justice of Allah. You will read a synopsis of all that has been said earlier now in this chapter. Still in order not to affect the continuity we are repeating what has been said before. We said earlier that there are three conditions for a certain thing to happen:

(i) The possibility of that happening about which we have discussed before.

(ii) The cause of the happening, the division of mankind in two groups, limitations of this world and the Justice of Allah, which we have already discussed.

(iii) Now remains the third condition, that is, the absence of any hurdle or obstruction.

There is No Obstacle in the Resurrection

Normally obstruction is for smaller forces as for example for a vehicle which is bound to run on one track there can be no remedy for it. A big stone lying on its way can serve as an obstacle for its motion, but this very stone cannot be a hurdle for a bird which does not follow a specific course for its motion. Of course the greater the force or strength of knowledge the lesser will be the number of obstacles.

There are two conditions for the dead coming back to life:

(i) Immense knowledge and

(ii) Infinite Power.

Therefore, how can there be any obstacle in the way of Allah Who has Infinite Knowledge of the location and condition of each and every particle of the earth? The Holy Qur'an says:

We know indeed what the earth diminishes of them, and with Us is a writing that preserves. (Surah Qaf, 50:4)

There can be no doubt about the assembling of the scattered particles before the Infinite Power of Allah and no obstacle can be conceived in the way of Allah. The Holy Qur'an has said about forty times:

Surely Allah is All-Powerful. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:20)

We ourselves are made of earth particles and we are only in this world because of wheat which grows from earth and we are alive because of rice and fruits which grow from earth. We came into existence first in the shape of a sperm of our father and then remained for some time in the womb of our mother and ultimately saw the light in this mortal world.

Yes, each and every cell of our body must have come from one part of the earth or the other. The Infinite Power Who made us from the earth particles will again bring us back to life from the decayed bones and scattered particles of our dead body.

However, it is the Satan which makes us skeptical about our coming back to life again but the Holy Qur'an by such verses as "This is easy to Allah",

which have come in the Holy Qur'an again and again, says that for Allah bringing the dead ones back to life is quite easy.

Real Difficulty That Faces Us

The real difficulty of ours is that we view Allah's Power and Knowledge from our own narrow thinking. Since we ourselves are limited we cannot conceive the infinity. In the Qur'anic narrations we come across from the beginning to the end this reality that Allah wants to broaden our mental horizon so as to let us come out of our limited frame of mind. For instance Allah says:

We produced a male child from virgin Maryam. (Surah Maryam, 19: 20)

We made the new-born child speak from the cradle. (Surah Maryam, 19:30)

We destroyed the people mounting on elephants by birds called "ababil " (swallows). (Surah al-Fil, 105: 3, 4)

We produced the stream of water by the striking on the ground with a staff. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:60)

We made the dead ones come to life by the blowing of the mouth's breath by Prophet Isa. (Surah al-Ma'idah, 5:110)

We made an old and infertile woman give birth to a male child, Prophet Yahya. (Surah Hud, 11:72)

We got Prophet Musa to be brought up by Fir'aun himself.(Surah al-Qasas, 28:8)

These and hundreds of other such instances are, in fact the means to broaden the limited horizon of man's materialistic approach so as to let him think beyond his limited frame of mind. The recommendations for reading the Holy Qur'an are meant to train the mind so as to make him comprehend these Qur'anic statements.

We should therefore not confine our thoughts to the natural laws and phenomena as it is Allah Who does everything whenever He wills. It always happens when He wills. In short before Allah's Infinite Power and Knowledge nothing is impossible and no obstacle comes in His way.

The Second Proof-Allah's Wisdom

We have presented Allah's Justice as the first proof of Resurrection. Now we deal with the second proof.

If the Resurrection is not going to happen, then the very purpose of man's creation and of the Universe will be futile and that will be against the Infinite Wisdom of Allah.

Suppose a man out of his love and regards for his guests prepares delicious dishes and serves it under a magnificent canopy and for the safety and security of the guests deputes people for managing and taking care of the feast.

But despite all these if these guests go after the dishes like cats and dogs and disrupt the whole arrangement, the host will wind up the feast ultimately. You can yourself make out as to what it will lead to? In the same way if there is no Resurrection the very purpose of Allah's work will become more futile than that of the feast Allah too has spread a dinner cloth for the people in the shape of this world. The Holy Qur'an says:

Creator of the heavens and the earth from nothingness! How could He have a son when He has no mate? He created everything, and is Omniscience. (Surah al-An'am, 6:101)

Who made everything excellent that He has created. (Surah as-Sajdah, 32:7)

With him all things are in determined measure. (Surah ar-Rad, 13:8)

And ask, 'To whom belongs what is in the heavens and the earth?' Say, 'To Allah; He has ordained mercy on Himself'. He will gather you on the Day of Resurrection which is certain to come. As for those who have lost their souls, they will not believe. (Surah al-An'am, 6:12)

It is He Who has created for you all that is in the earth, and He directed Himself to the heaven, so He made them complete seven heavens and He is Omniscience. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:29)

And surely We have honoured the children of Adam, and We carry them in the land and the sea, and We have given them of the good things, and We have made them to excel by an appropriate excellence over most of those whom We have created. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17.70)

The Earth Underneath a Glorious Canopy

The Holy Qur'an says:

Surely We have adorned the nearest heavens with ornaments of stars. (Surah as-Saffat, 37:6)

Then those (angels who) distribute the blessings by Our command. (Surah az-Zariyat, 51:4)

Then those who out-space the others swiftly. an-Naziah, 79:4)

The Holy Prophet as a Sympathetic Physician

Imam Ali says, "The Holy Prophet was a leader who in the love and sympathy for the people used to take a round and after spotting spiritual patients used to treat them". Truly speaking, the Almighty All-Wise Allah has spread for mankind a table which is equipped with all its characteristic specialties but many people do not pay due regard to it and one of the groups is tyrant, free and in comfort, while the other one is in captivity and is oppressed.

After a time all will die and this spread will be rolled up for good. Can such an action on the part of the wicked group justified? The Holy Qur'an says:

Those who commemorate Allah while standing, sitting, or resting on their sides and who think about the creation of the heavens and the earth and say, "Lord, You have not created all this without reason. Glory be to You. Lord, save us from the torment of the Fire. (Surah Ale Imran, 3;191)

In the Holy Qur'an Allah has been called Wise about hundred times and we see the signs of His Wisdom everywhere, in the eyelashes, in the curve of our foot, in the mother's love, in the act of a suckling child, in the saltish tears of the eyes, in the soft watery flavour of the mouth, in the man's inhaling of oxygen, in the plant's inhaling of carbon-dioxide, in the sound waves with the ear, in the light rays with the eyes, and in the foodstuff with the digestive processes, in the noiseless motion of the earth, in the fulfilment

of man's total requirements, and in the abundance of the bounties which according to the Holy Qur'an cannot be counted.

The deep-laid natural phenomena are such that the experts of material sciences have spent their entire life to know them, but they have been unable to solve a single secret of their mystery. Is this world with all its delicacies, maturity, and holiness meant to be destroyed after a few days life?

An Example: Will you allow that for a high ranking officer a room which is ordered to be equipped with all the amenities, water, electricity, telephone, curtains, furniture, microphone etc. is blasted with a hand grenade after it is used once or twice? Therefore, how can we believe that Allah Who has created this vast Universe with such delicate details will blow it up with an earthquake of explosion after a short while?

Will a potmaker allow his potteries to be destroyed? Thus if there is not going to be Resurrection, then Allah's work will only be restricted to making wheat from earth, sperms from wheat, a child from sperm, from child to be a grown up and stout man, then to an old and weak man, and finally to die and decay into dust particles.

Is that all He should do? Really speaking if that was to happen, and we were to be reduced to dust then why were we not allowed to remain as dust? Will all this not amount to futility? The Holy Qur'an says:

Do you think We created you for nothing, and that you will not be returned to Us? (Surah al-Mominun, 23:115)

Is not the creation of the heavens, the earth, the rivers, the sun, the moon, the stars, the trees, the animals etc. for man and is the ultimate destruction of man a sign of wisdom?

If there is no Resurrection, then the life of man will be like converting thousands of litre of pure water into urine and thou sands of kilograms of foodstuff into human exereta . In that case there will remain no differentiation between light of a candle and that of an electric lamp, and between a donkey cart and an air-plane.

Marxism which clamours for the workers' rights, labourers' government, importance of work, insurance of the labourers, their leave, bonus, right of strike, etc. says the same thing. It says that all these things come to an end, for after death we all perish.

If, however, the sole aim of our life and our slogans is to procure bread, clothes and shelter after which we are to be finished for good, then what is the necessity of undergoing all these troubles when sooner or later we have to perish, in that case why one should not end one's life by committing suicide?

In short if it is taken for granted that after death we all shall be perished then why should we undergo so much trouble in this world? Naturally when the youthful age is so short-lived it will be futile to invest one's efforts to embellishments.

If we are supposed to be destroyed after death then why is there a desire for living in our nature? Of course from the communist point of view, the future of the world is dark and has no existence. Here all actions are destined to be destroyed and the ultimate result of man's life is useless and it has no reality.

From this point of view sometimes man is prompted to ask why he has been created and what is the purpose of his creation? When he has been created why should he not turn a wolf so as to achieve some success even though it is achieved at the expense of many human lives? And when he is heading towards destruction then let it be so that he may revel in the destruction of others. If man is perishable like animals then let man use man as beast of burden and let him eat another man's flesh.

When all have to live and die for nothing then why not let them become a delicious morsel for me. Yes, the materialistic approach of life leads to that dangerous point at which we have already reached. Though there are famine-stricken countries which are clamouring for help, the developed countries in order to maintain the price level throw their wheat and fruits away into the sea or bury them in the ground and this is shown on the television also.

To my mind we should ask the wahi (revelation) as to how the Wisdom of Allah has described the sure happening of Resurrection. In this connection the Holy Qur'an says:

Does man think that he is to be left to himself, alone?(Surah al-Qiyamah, 75:36)

That is to say will he die ultimately and there will be nothing afterwards? There are several verses in the Holy Qur'an which tell us that we have not come into this world just for fun and, nor have we to do any useless and wrong things.

Neither our aims and objectives by any means are simple and ordinary, nor are we intended to be lost in the wilderness of this world. But the purpose of our creation is for the training of mankind and to be brought to trial in this world which is based on definite rules and principles.

The real objective of this creation is to chose from among various wrong and un-divine ways the Path of Allah, and to recognize and worship Allah. Sooner or later this Path will lead us to Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall return. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:156)

And Allah created the heavens and the earth with truth and that every soul may be rewarded for what it has earned and they shall not be wronged. (Surah al-Jathiya, 45:22)

Every soul is held in pledge for what it earns. (Surah Muddaththir, 74:38)

And about Luqman advising his son the Holy Qur'an says:

O my son! whatever it may be, even though equal to a mustard seed in weight, or within a rock or in the sky or deep down in the earth, Allah will bring it forth. Verily Allah is Perceptive, All-Aware. (Surah Luqman, 31:16)

A True Incident: A man came to Prophet's Masjid and started saying, "O Prophet of Allah teach me the Holy Qur'an". The Holy Prophet entrusted him to one of his companions. The companion took him aside and started teaching him Surah al-Zilzal and when he read the following verses:

He who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it. And he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it. (Surah al-Zilzal, 99:7, 8)

That man pondered over for a while and then asked his tutor. "Is this Allah's revelation". The tutor said, "Yes". Then the man said, "I have now

got my lesson from these very verses and when all my deeds, small and big, are to be accounted for ultimately, I am now aware of my obligations and this is enough for me to lead to the correct Path. I now go. Allah may bless you".

When the man had gone away the tutor came to the Holy Prophet and said, "Today's pupil was not enthusiastic, he did not let me recite anything more than the short verses of the Holy Qur'an; and said. 'If there is one person only in the house, then for him one call is sufficient. Yes, I have got my lesson all right".

The Holy Prophet said, "He has already attained the cognition of Allah and gained the religious teachings".

A Matter of Lamentation: This man took his lesson from one single verse of the Holy Qur'an and got himself reformed but it is a matter of lamentation that people like me have been interpreting for years the Qur'anic verses and the traditions in different ways in pleasant conversation, but

Inducing the Unbelievers: Our infallible Imams and guides put forward, in an interesting way, their views before their opponents. We mention here how they handled the unbelievers.

In our day-to-day life we receive information which carry some important message and we are influenced by it differently that is whenever there is a greater possibility of gain or loss the greater will be our reaction.

For example if there is a hope of 90% gain but the profit is only of 5% in a certain transaction, still the people will come forward. Similarly, if the possibility of the gain is 70% and the profit is 30%, still the people will come forward because the profit ratio is increased. And if the possibility of gain is reduced to 10% only but the profit ratio is 90% still people will come forward.

Again if the gain is 1% only but the profit is doubled that is 100%, still people will come forward. If the possibility of gain is one out of 10,000 and the profit is high still the people will come forward as it happens in case of lottery or lucky draws of prize bonds etc. where the winners are only a few out of the thousands and the chance of profit is only 1/10,000, still people will participate in it because the prize money offered is many times greater than investment.

From this we understand that howsoever small the possibility of gain may be it is balanced by the possibility of winning a high money value or profit, which means taking risk for obtaining gain.

Now we have a faint belief in the life after death, and in the minutest scrutiny by Allah and in the messages of the Prophets, the Imams and the pious and the devout about the wrath of Allah in the shape of the Hell and Grace and Blessings of Allah in the shape of Paradise. (We on our part have firm belief and conviction in it, but we say it for those who are ignorant and unbelievers).

At this stage we can say that if we have the slightest belief in these things, or that it has a remote possibility, then we should come forward because Hell is eternal and Allah's wrath is very severe and Paradise is everlasting and the proximity of Allah is very important.

Hence we should not mind the weak or strong possibility but since the loss or profit is also very important, we should mind it. Suppose a child informs us of a hornet in the nest, or of a snake, or narrates somebody's falling down from the staircase, or someone's drowning in the river or his finding a $100 note or a bag of gold on the way.

In these news a man does not mind whether the source of these news is a mere child or a grown up man but what is of importance to him is gain, which you believe to be true.

The news about the snake, drowning in the river, bag of gold etc. move the hearer into action irrespective of the fact whether the source of information is reliable or unreliable. (It is with due apologies to the pious leaders that I have compared their versions with those of a child as an example just with the purpose of making the meaning of religion clear to those who are ignoring it).

In short when a man gets some useful or harmful information from a child and reacts to it then why should he not listen to the pious and the dedicated leaders who have been acclaimed as the best people in history?

Why do the people not listen to the Prophets who never showed any weakness or slackness in conveying their message to the people and remained steadfast in their mission. They were the voice of their predecessors and they provided the mankind the news of the next world. They performed many miracles and showed Allah 's signs, and hundreds and thousands of people followed them and sincerely accepted their invitation.

Despite these things (assuming that a certain group will never be willing to accept), why a doubt does not arise in the people's heart about the child's narration? Naturally when man because of his concern for his gain or loss which is not a permanent thing can react to the statement of a child, should he not react to the call of the Prophets?

There is no loss in following their Path of the Prophets but there is a loss in not following their path. From the point of the unbelievers also there is a loss in not following the path laid down by the Prophets and which cannot be averted by supplication, wealth or implorations.

This is an eternal loss which is due to the Wrath of Allah. Thus every sensible person must realize the call of the Prophets in his heart and should at least be aware of the possible danger, because gain or loss is very important.

Perhaps I may be able to present the gist of this discussion in the following example.

On the roadside we come across bakers, drapers, carpet dealers, and an estate agency who have their different objectives.

A baker is sure that hundred per cent of the people would come to his shop and buy bread though each bread carries a very little profit. The draper is not as sure as the baker but he has 80% hope that customers would come and buy cloth from him and the margin of profit on cloth is bigger than it is on bread. That is why he opens his shop every day.

The carpet dealer is not so sure of getting customers and has fifty per cent hope only, but from the point of view that a carpet carries a bigger

margin of profit, he too opens his shop daily and waits for his customers. Thus it is not the number of customers only which is the cause of opening the shop but it is the consideration of profit that counts so much.

A broker has only 5% hope of his success, but since the profit in the land transactions is very great he opens his office and awaits his client.

The profit of a believer lies in the Pleasure and Grace of Allah and the eternal Paradise which is going to be his permanent abode. A sinner's loss lies in the Wrath of Allah and his permanent abode in the Hell.

The gain and loss are so great at their own place that we cannot realize them. As the risk factor gets diminishing, the amount of the deal covers it. We should, therefore, get up and try to reduce all those risks (which we believe to be almost certain) or to achieve those profitable results which are also come to happen. To act upon this is to follow the path shown by the Prophets and thus we can get out of the clutches of the Satan and the allurement of our internal inordinate desires.

The Impact of the Belief in Resurrection

Hope and fear in whatever small proportion they may be are the best incentive to man's performance not to speak of the hope for eternal Paradise and the fear of eternal Hell.

If we pin our faith and belief on the Resurrection day, its influence and impact will not be hidden from anyone. He, who knows that here there will be assessment and scrutiny, and accounting and there is justice, imprisonment, punishment for every big and small thing, he can never be thoughtless, oppressor, and sinner. And he who knows that all his actions will be assessed will remain completely satisfied. We quote below a few Qur'anic verses:

Impact of Resurrection on Economic Matters

The Holy Qur'an addresses the dealers and say:

Who insist on being given full when they take from others. But when they measure out to others or weigh out for them, give less. Do they not think that they will be raised again on a grievous day the day, all mankind will stand before the Lord of the worlds? (Surah al-Mutaffifin, 83:2-6)

Here the Holy Qur'an reminds dishonest sellers of the Resurrection day. Without doubt this is an example of the impact of faith in the Resurrection day, which has a direct bearing on economic matters such as production, distribution, marketing, commerce and trade and in particular wasteful expenditure.

Impact of Resurrection on Military Affairs

Here we quote an example: A large delegation of people called on one of the Prophets of Bani Isra'il and said to him, "We have decided to fight against the oppressors but for that we need an able ruler". The Prophet replied, "In my opinion you do not seem to be fit for the battle". They said, "We are fully determined to fight against them because we are too tired of bearing their tortures and oppression".

Their Prophet said, "Allah has appointed Talut as your ruler as he is an able, experienced and strong young man and is well-versed in warfare

affairs". But when the war was declared a group of the people who were very enthusiastic over fighting got scared in the very first phase and deserted the field. Some made an excuse of the poverty of the commander of the forces and refused to march forward.

And others who had claimed that they would remain steadfast in the hour of trial also became impatient and left the field.* Some others who had not deserted the field became panicky after seeing the strong army of the enemy, and started saying, "We do not have the strength to fight". A small regiment of the soldiers, who believed in the Resurrection day, raising the slogan that a small band of soldiers could overpower the larger force of the enemy by Allah's help, fell upon the enemy soldiers and defeated them.

This narration of the story of Talut and Jalut which is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, shows that belief in Resurrection leads to steadfastness and victory in the war. The Holy Qur'an says:

And when they went out against Jalut and his forces they said, "Our Lord, bestow upon us patience, make our steps firm and assist us against the unbelievers. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:250)

Martial temperament has much to do with the mental disposition. That warrior who considers his future to be linked with an eternal life, proximity with Allah and His Prophet cannot be compared with the fighter who considers death as his total annihilation and destruction. About those who are diffident in marching ahead to the battlefield, Allah says:

But the provision of this world's life compared with the Hereafter is but little. (Surah at-Tauba, 9:38)

Impact of Resurrection Against Politicians and Transgressors

In order to put Prophet Musa to disgrace Fir'aun sent for all the magicians of the town so that they might counteract the miracle of Prophet Musa. These magicians who till then had no faith in Resurrection expected wealth from Fir'aun. They showed their mean mentality also and started saying to Fir'aun, O Fir'aun, if we give defeat to Musa, will you reward us". Fir'aun said, "Yes I would". When the contest began, the magician did what they could do. And Prophet Musa threw his staff on the ground. It turned into a big snake.

The magicians at once realized that this could not be a magic but it was a miracle from Allah. The magicians then in the very presence of Fir'aun declared faith in Prophet Musa. Fir'aun got angry with them and said, "You people have brought your faith on him without my permission, I shall have your hand and feet cut in diagonal order only and have you hanged from the top of the trunk of the date-palm tree. But these magicians who were a moment before expecting rewards from Fir'aun after declaring their faith in Resurrection said to him, "Do whatever you want to do; you are only powerful in this world only". The Holy Qur'an says:

They said, "We do not prefer you to what has come to us of clear arguments and to Him Who made us. Therefore, decide what you are going to decide; you can only decide on this world 's life. (Surah Ta Ha, 20: 72)

The magicians further said to Fir'aun:

There shall be no harm, surely we shall return to our Lord(Surah ash-Shu'ara, 26.50)

In fact, the belief in Resurrection in a moment brought about such a great change and the wealth and the rewards that they considered a great thing a moment ago now appeared to them good-for-nothing and they were ridiculing Fir'aun and with boldness they were telling him, "You can only decide on this world's life". In short it was the belief in Resurrection which brought about such a revolutionary change in men, enlightened their soul, and infused them with a spirit of selfsacrifice and martyrdom.

Impact of Resurrection of the Deprived Persons

All of us have heard that when Aqil, the brother of Imam Ali, requested him to increase his share from the public treasury the Holy Imam after setting an iron bar ablaze brought it nearer to the hand of his brother Aqil and said, "If you are scared of an ordinary fire of this world, I am scared of Allah's eternal wrath and displeasure". (Sermon 227, Peak of Eloquence.)

All of us have also heard that during their childhood Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn fell ill and the Holy Prophet with some of his companions came to inquire about the health of his grandsons. Some of them suggested to Imam Ali to observe fast for three days in order to invoke Allah's Blessings on the ailing children and he agreed to it. When both the children recovered from their illness Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn and Fizzah, the maid-servant observed the pledged fast.

However, on the first day when all of them after offering their dusk prayers sat for breaking their fast, a knock on the door announced, "I am a poor and needy person. Help me". At this they gave their bread to the beggar and broke their fast with water. On the second day a similar thing happened. This time it was an orphan who said, "I am hungry. Give me food". And all of them gave all their food to him.

On the third day it was a captive who asked for food and they gave him all they had to break their fast with. All the blessed five souls observed their fast for three days and gave their bread to an indigent, an orphan and a captive on three consecutive days and broke their fast with water only. The Holy Qur'an has narrated this incident in Surah ad-Dahr. It says:

Surely we fear a stern, distressful day from our Lord (Surah ad-Dahr, 76:10)

Indeed how the belief in Resurrection binds men with the obligation of looking into the rights of the deprived people of the society. Of course those who do not care for the poor and the needy will admit this on the Resurrection day that one reason of their going to the Hell would be that they had not cared for the poor nor had they fed them. The Holy Qur'an says that they would say:

And we did not feed the poor. (Surah Muddaththir, 74:44)

In the following verse we learn that indifference towards orphans and the poor amounts to disbelief in the Resurrection day. The Holy Qur'an says:

Have you seen him who denies the Day o f Judgement? It is he who treats the orphan with harshness, and does not urge others to feed the needy. (Surah Ma'un, 107:1-3)

Belief in Resurrection Ensures Perfection

Often virtues, moral qualities and spirit of self-sacrifice mean leading the life of deprivation with simplicity and suffering hardships and difficulties. We find some consolation in the belief that on the Resurrection day these will be duly rewarded. The belief in the sovereignty of Allah consoles man that the hardship and the difficulties in this world would be duly rewarded on the Resurrection day. What is that which causes man to lay down his life or spend his money on the poor and the needy or compels him to abdicate his inordinate desires?

Naturally if there happens to be no concept of the Remembrance of Allah and of the love for meeting Him and His saints how can we pass these complicated ways.

If there happens to be no recompense of the deeds and actions, man would not be prepared to bear hardship.

If there happens to be no punishment which thing can prevent man from oppression and tyrannies.

If today the believers bear the mocking remarks and scoffings of the unbelievers, it is due to those assurances which we find in the Holy Qur'an. It says:

So today (on Resurrection day) those who believe shall laugh at the unbelievers. (Surah al-Mutaffifin, 83:34)

The wife of Fir'aun, Asiya has no love for gold and silver in the palatial abode of Fir'aun as she has pinned her faith on some other place of abode. The Holy Qur'an says:

And Allah sets forth an example to those who believe the wife of Fir'aun when she said, 'My Lord! build for me a house with Thee in the garden and deliver me from Fir'aun and his doing, and deliver me from the unjust people'.(Surah at-Tahrim, 66:11)

Indeed the palace of Fir'aun is just like a prison to one whose heart yearns for Paradise.

Imam Ali says, "In great loss is the man, who abandoned the Hereafter for the sake of this world".

The impact of Resurrection day on piety, trustworthiness, and many other matters, big and small, partly or wholly is not hidden from anybody. On this subject we quote some examples from the Holy Qur'an and the traditions.

Belief in Resurrection and Its Remembrance

Just as without the remembrance of Allah, the belief in Allah is of no use, in the same way only believing in the Resurrection day is not sufficient; it is very necessary to remember it. The Holy Qur'an particularly reminds and warns only the man of wisdom. It says:

What! he who is obedient during hours of the night, Prostrating himself and standing, takes care of the Here after and hopes for the mercy of his Lord (be like one who does not.2) Say, 'Are those who know and those who do not know alike? Only the wise are mindful. (Surah Zummar, 39.9)

Unlike some people's belief that the remembrance of death and the Resurrection day makes one negligent about worldly affairs and material gains, our belief is that the remembrance of the Resurrection day prevents us

from heedlessness and indiscipline. He who is cautious about his performances big or small will not commit any wrong thing.

Of course our belief in the Resurrection day is not sufficient, but we should remember this day of accountability and we should scrutinize our behaviour at the same time. It is just as only liking the flower is not enough to give us mental pleasure but it is necessary that from time to time we should enjoy its pleasant fragrance.

Sometimes the Holy Qur'an objects to those who do not have belief in the Resurrection day and sometimes it criticizes those who are unmindful of it or have forgotten it altogether. The Holy Qur'an says:

They only know the palpable life of this world, and are oblivious of the Hereafter. (Surah ar-Rum, 30:7)

The visit to the graves is recommended so that we should be reminded of our death. We all know that during day and night we recite the following Qur'anic verse several times in our obligatory prayers so that we are reminded of the Resurrection day:

Master of the Day of Judgment. (Surah Fateha, 1:4)

The Effects of Remembering Death and the Resurrection Day

Imam Ja'far Sadiq says about the effects of remembering Death and the Resurrection day:

• emembering of death suppresses the inordinate desires

• It uproots the very foundation of negligence and apathy.

• With the reminding of Allah's promise, it strengthens man's heart.

• It softens the hard mentality of man.

• It demolishes the banners of inordinate desires and transgression.

• It suppresses the evil of greediness and makes the world humble before one's eyes.

After that the Holy Imam says, the saying of the Holy Prophet, "A moment's reflection and pondering over is better than one year's worship" (Biharul Anwar, vol. VI, p. 133) means thinking over and making arrangement for one's future, that is, thinking over his being questioned and his answering, and his accountability in the court of Allah's Justice.

We read in the traditions that the most wise and thoughtful are those who keep remembering death all the time. (Biharul Anwar, vol. VI, p. 135)

When the Holy Prophet said that hearts also get rusted like iron, the people asked, "With what substance can it be cleansed?" The Holy Prophet replied: "By remembering death and reciting the Holy Qur'an".

Another tradition that is narrated from the Holy Prophet is this: "Remember death frequently for it has four effects.

(i) It washes off your sins.

(ii) It reduces your keen fondness for the world.

(iii) It checks your indulgence in bad practices and improper use of wealth during the period of affluency.

(iv) It makes a man content with whatever little quantity of wealth he has as during poverty his remembering of death makes him realize how he will account before Allah for the wealth he has spent and the deprivation of the people, because he sees that when he has a small quantity of wealth his accountability also would be less". (Nahjul Fasahat, saying, 444)

Imam Ali in connection with a tradition says, "He who remembers death frequently will remain content with whatever httle quantity of wealth he has. He never craves for more and he neither becomes greedy nor miser". (Biharul Anwar, vol. VI)

Actually, the world deceives its own lovers. Anyone who after having the thought of death and the Resurrection Day diverts his heart to the next world, this world's hypocrisies, pomp and show do not allure him towards it.

Imam Ali says, "Anyone who remembers death frequently saves himself from the hypocrisies of the world".

In another tradition which is about the impact of remembering death, we read: "Anyone who sees death in front of him and awaits it, will never lay behind in his daily performances because he knows that the time at his disposal is short and death can overtake him any movement. He gets busy in doing the noble deeds as much as is humanly possible".

Imam Ali reminds the people of how death overtook the people of the past generations and prepares them for it and says, "Where are now the

kings of Yemen and Hijaz and their offsprings? Where have the Emperors of Iran and Rome gone?

Where are the tyrants and their progenies? Where are those people who had built strong fortresses and decorated them with gold? Where are those people, whose life span was greater than that of yours and whose signs were greater than those of yours?"

Actually those mothers who are anxious for the future of their daughters, prepare their dowries, little.by little, from their very childhood.

Those traders who think of their future debts and liabilities start saving something from the beginning.

Similarly those people who are concerned about death and the Resurrection day from today give up their bad deeds and start performing noble deeds so as to present them on the Resurrection day.

Some people asked Ayatullah Shirazi, who was an erudite scholar of Karbala: "If a credible man tells you that you are going to die in a week's time what will you do in the remaining few days?"

He replied, "I will continue doing what I have been doing since my youth, because from the days of my youth whenever I intended to do a thing I thought of the explanation to give on the Resurrection day and, therefore, for me to die at any moment is no worry at all".

Such people are the dedicated followers of that exalted person, who on the 19th of Ramazanul Mubarak after receiving the fatal wound of the sword of Ibn Muljam said, "By Allah I have become triumphant".

This very exalted personage in his sermon in Nahjul Balaghah advises his son to remember death at all moments so that by the time death overtakes him, his deeds are with him intact and he may not be questioned for his indifference. (Vide, Peak of Eloquence, ISP, 1984)

We read in many Qur'anic verses that when you think that you are a self-made person and you are pious and honourable before Allah, you should not be afraid of death; rather you should be desirous of it.

Remembering of Death in Supplications

Remembering death and the Resurrection day is the integral part of supplications. As for example in the Supplication of Abu Hamza Thamali we read as follows:

O Lord! At the time of my dying bestow Your Mercy on my sorrow and helplessness.

O Lord! Bestow Your Mercy in the loneliness of my grave and in my fear and restlessness.

O Lord! On the Day of Judgement Bestow Your Mercy at the time of the scrutiny of my deeds when I am disgraced for failing to give explanation.

O Lord! Bestow Your Mercy at the time when my friends take my coffin to the graveyard.

Imam Ali's Supplication in Masjid Kufa

O Lord! Protect me from that day and put me under Your shelter, when the tyrant will be chewing his own flesh and would be repenting and saying, 'Would that I had not followed those who misguided me to go astray and instead had adopted the path as shown by the Holy Prophet'.

O Lord! Bestow Your Mercy and protection on me on the day when the parents would not be able to help me; when the repentance of the tyrants will be of no avail; when man will run away even from his father, mother, brothers sons and friends when man will be singularly responsible for his own deeds

O Lord ! Protect me on the day when the sinners would wish that their sons, brothers, friends and the entire family might be caught instead of them, and save me from the torment of Hell.

Reciting of these supplications cures the sick and brightens the darkness of the soul. They purify the souls, broaden our mental horizon and enlighten us.

However the sinners and the transgressors are those who do not believe in the accountability and the Resurrection day or if they have belief in it they are spiritually bankrupt.

Why Do We not Remember Death?

Imam Ali says, "I am concerned about two things. Your following of the inordinate desires and your long hopes, as the former will distract you from the right path and the latter will take you away from the remembrance of the Resurrection day". (Peak of Eloquence)

We read in another tradition. "If somebody less remembers death and the Resurrection day it is because he has long and unbridled hopes and desires".

Consequences of Denying the Resurrection Day

(i) Shirking Responsibilities: When someone wishes to derive some benefit from a tree or a land in a deserted place, his conscience will prick him and will prevent him from doing so because he has not obtained the consent of the owner. In order to deceive his own conscience he says to himself that actually there happens to be nobody as the owner of these trees and land and on this pretext he takes advantage of the situation, or he says to himself that such and such person does not go away from the scene so that he might get an opportunity to fulfil his desire. The Holy Qur'an says:

Yet man is skeptical of what is right before him. He asks: 'When will the Day of Resurrection be ? ' (Surah al-Qiyamah, 75:5)

Whenever a man wants to see the women of others, he professes that all of us are brothers and sisters to one another.

When he is frightened to face the tyrant, he takes an excuse and says, "We should observe dissimulation". When he feels diffident he says, "We should cooperate with the people". True, man has such a tendency of finding excuses and inventing pretexts that he himself becomes unaware of his faculties. We call such an attitude as shirking responsibilities".

(ii) Lack of Faith in Allah's Might and Knowledge: There is no practical reasoning with those who deny the belief in the Resurrection day. On the other hand they consider it impossible that the dead will come into life again. We give some examples here. The Holy Qur'an says:

They say. 'There is nothing but our life in this world, we live and die and nothing annihilate us but time and they have no knowledge of it; they only speculate. (Surah Jathiya, 45:24)

The unbelievers claim that they will not be raised again. Tell them. 'Why not? By my Lord, you will certainly be raised again, and then informed of what you had done. That is easy for Allah'. (Surah Taghabun, 64:7)

But they say: 'When we have reduced to dust, how can we be created all anew? In fact, they deny the meeting with their Lord. (Surah as-Sajdah, 32.10)

Similarly in many other verses of the Holy Qur'an it has been mentioned that those who do not believe in the Resurrection day, because they say as to how it could be possible that after death when they had been reduced to dust would come back to life again.

We see that the unbelievers in the Resurrection day always are sceptical about it and question as to how it can happen and how it would happen. But the Holy Qur'an answers them in unambiguous term, which we have already referred to in our discussions on Resurrection.

Now at this place we quote a tradition of the Holy Prophet who says: "Whenever you happen to witness the spring season, revive your belief in coming back to life again after death". (The Eternal Life, p. 45 by Martyr Murtaza Mutahhery)

The Holy Qur'an also quite often stresses that coming of the dead to life again is just like the land and the trees coming back to life again. In this context we quote the gist of two couplets of Mathnavi of Maulana Rum:

"After the autumn, the spring is the proof of the coming back to life again.

In the spring the mysteries of nature are unravelled and whatever the earth has consumed becomes evident".

The reasoning of denying the Resurrection is based on the disbelief in the Power of Allah and that is why the Holy Qur'an gives many examples of the Divine Power as for instance it says that Almighty All-Powerful Lord Who first created us would again bring back to life after we have been reduced to dust particles. It is easier to reduce something to dust than to create in the first instance.

It is He Who first creates and then reverts it. This is easy for Him. (Surah ar-Rum, 30:27)

There is nothing which Allah is not able to do. Allah has Power to do all things.

Another pretext of those who do not believe in the Resurrection was the question as to when the Resurrection day will happen? In the following Qur'anic verse it is mentioned that after hearing the explanation given by the Holy Prophet the unbelievers scoffed in surprise and asked when it would happen. The Holy Qur'an says:

Or some other created things which may seem to you most difficult to create. They will then say. 'Who will revert us back?' Say: 'He Who created you in the beginning'. Still they will shake their heads at you and say: 'When will it be? Say: 'In the near future'. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:51)

These people do not know that the exact time of the Resurrection day is known only to Allah but having no knowledge of the time of happening should not be the excuse for denying the Resurrection day.

It is like that when a man does not know the time of his death himself can he deny the fact of his dying one day? There was another excuse as they said if Allah would reproduce the dead back to life the Holy Prophet should bring their dead ancestors to life again. In this connection the Holy Qur'an says.

And when our clear revelations are recited to them, they have no other argument but to say: 'Bring our ancestors back if you are truthful' (Surah Jathiya, 45:25)

How strangely these people behaved and placed impossible demands and raised funny questions! However if one is not unreasonable and obstinate, his believing in the Resurrection will be based on the proof of his sleeping, waking, and the reappearing of fresh leaves from the trees, but if one is adamant the coming back of his dead father to life would not convince him still and he would say: "Bring back my forefathers to life again, bring my youth again, or would demand the demolition of the whole system of Universe but would never believe in the Resurrection day.

Is it not in the Holy Qur'an that some people came to the Holy Prophet and said, "If you wish that we should believe in you, bring down the planets on the earth, produce Allah in human shape before us, break the moon into two halves, produce a live camel out of this mountain now and at once".

But unfortunately these people are quite unaware of the fact that the work of the Prophets is to show the signs of Allah, to provide proofs of them and guide the people towards prosperity and perfection, and that this world is not a show-room or an industrial home.

Had they not said after having seen the moon split into two parts that it was all sorcery?

Did Prophet Isa who used to raise the dead back to life convince the people of Allah's Power?

Can for the sake of converting a few to belief, the entire system of nature be reversed? Does Allah possess form and shape so as to appear before such stupid fools?

We close this discussion on a Qur'anic verse. Allah in reply to those who consider the coming back of the dead to life again impossible says:

Do they not perceive that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth, has the power to create the like of them? There is no doubt that He has fixed a term for them. But the wicked desdain everything but unbelief. (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17.99)

In short if the people need some miracles in support of bringing their belief, miracles have been performed by the Prophets already, but if some of them will make it a precondition of the demolition of the system of the universe, the Prophets would never yield to such demands.

Death Is a Divine Law

Does it mean that after death the Divine Power will cease to exist and death will prevail upon the Will of Allah? Not at all; because this dying itself is subservient to the Will of Allah. This is one of such things as have been predestined. The Holy Qur'an says.

We have ordained death among you and We are not to be overcome. (Surah Waqiyah, 56:60)

The interesting thing is that in the Holy Qur'an "dying" is mentioned fourteen times with the word tawaffa which means "entrusting". That is to say after death one will not be perished but that Allah will take His thing back without increase or decrease and Who will entrust it to His appointed workers.

Is dying actually means being destroyed ultimately? No. It is because destruction does not wish to be reproduced. The Holy Qur'an says:

Who created death and life in order to try you, which of you is best in deeds and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving. (Surah al-Mulk, 67:2)

From this it is proved that death is not destruction but it leads to another place where one is transferred. That is "dying" is attributed to the word tawaffa. The interesting point is that similar meaning is found in the sayings of the Holy Prophet as for instance he said, "Do not consider that death will annihilate you but consider that you will be shifted from one house to another house". (Biharul Anwar, Chap. on Purgatory)